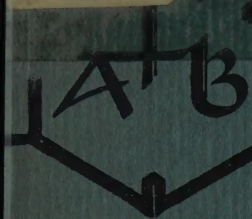


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PUBLICATIONS

Educational Series • No. 12

CONCERNING THE EDUCATION OF BLIND CHILDREN

Compiled by

GEORGIE LEE ABEL

American Foundation for the Blind
15 West 16th Street, New York 11, N. Y.



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15 WEST 16th STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10011

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PUBLICATIONS

American Foundation for the Blind
New York

This pamphlet is one in a series of monographs issued from time to time by the American Foundation for the Blind in an attempt to disseminate information on projects carried out by the Foundation and on present-day services to blind persons. The monographs are classified according to subjects into:

1. General Information
2. Preschool Series
3. Educational Series
4. Vocational Series
5. Research Series
6. Group Reports
7. Legislation Series
8. Studies in Community
Planning

Price \$1.00

Published June 1959 by the
AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND
15 WEST 16TH STREET, NEW YORK 11, N. Y.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.
THE WILLIAM BYRD PRESS, INC.

FOREWORD

This volume is composed of a series of papers dealing with various aspects of the education of blind children. All of them have been presented previously at conferences, workshops or courses dealing with programs in the education of the blind. The meetings for which the papers were specifically prepared were scheduled over a period of ten months covering, roughly, October 1, 1957 to August 1, 1958. With but two exceptions, none of the papers has appeared previously in any other publication. Appreciation is expressed to The National Braille Club for permission to reprint "The Growth of the Resource Room" by Georgie Lee Abel and "The Itinerant Teaching Program for Blind Children" by Josephine L. Taylor.

It is hoped that this compilation of articles will be of help to students in the education of exceptional children, to new teachers who are beginning their work with blind children, and to parents' and citizens' groups that are concerned with planning in the local communities or states for various types of services to blind children. It should not be looked upon, however, as a text which provides a student or a professional person engaged in the education of the blind with a total outline covering all aspects of this area of education.

The selection of topics was made possible because of the work of the compiler as a consultant with those groups for whom these papers were originally written. The publication of this volume is the result of a desire to share the contributions of these authors with those who could not be present at the meetings at which the papers were originally presented.

The American Foundation for the Blind wishes to thank the various writers for submitting their papers for this publication. We also thank the persons in charge of the various meetings who recommended this means of sharing the papers with a wider audience.

M. ROBERT BARNETT
Executive Director

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The Preschool Blind Child, His Needs and Resources

Address delivered at the Workshop, "The Blind Child in the Classroom," University of Denver, June 23-27, 1958.

BY PAULINE M. MOOR

According to the best estimates available, there are approximately 350,000 blind persons in the United States today. Of this number, 50 per cent are over fifty years of age, 10 per cent are children under twenty and at least 2.5 per cent or 9,000 are children six years of age and under.¹ Again, it has been estimated that probably 50 per cent of the blindness among children of school age today is of prenatal origin. In other words, more than half of the children of school age have been blind since infancy.

With the increasing number of children blind as infants in the last few years, attention has been turned to the needs of these children and of their parents. For purposes of this discussion, we shall assume that the term "preschool" refers, as is implied, to that period between birth and the time when the child enters an educational program, presumably about six years of age.

The dramatic story of the appearance of retrolental fibroplasia as related to prematurity has been publicized widely.² While this diagnosis continued to baffle the ophthalmologist and the pediatrician, the number of children born prematurely and blinded by the peculiar ocular abnormality was increasing at such a rate that it was estimated that in 1953 one child out of every 4,000 births would be blind before seven years of age.³ Today, the significance

¹ Unpublished material from the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness and the American Foundation for the Blind.

² T. L. Terry, "Extreme Prematurity and Fibroblastic Overgrowth of Persistent Vascular Sheath Behind Each Crystalline Lens. I, Preliminary Report." *American Journal of Ophthalmology* (February 1942) pp. 203-204.

³ C. E. Kerby, "Blindness in Preschool Children." (National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Publication 113) p. 8.

of oxygen therapy is well known and the incidence of blindness in children due to this particular diagnosis has dropped markedly. However, many of the children born during this period of time are still young and compose a group that is unique in that most of these children are either totally blind or have only light perception and as such they have presented, as a group, new problems and a set of circumstances to professional persons interested in the social, educational, and psychological aspects of blindness. There has probably never before been such a large group of children growing up without any useful vision.

While research proceeded in the medical field to determine, if possible, the cause of this diagnosis, which was obviously the leading cause of blindness now among infants, other professional persons serving these young children and their families were asking: 1) What fosters the optimum growth and development of the child who has no vision; 2) How can parents be helped to a better understanding of blindness, of the needs of the child in relation to his visual loss; and 3) How can they be helped to feel their own adequacy in meeting parental responsibilities.

Some of the studies concerned with the causes of this condition were extensive, i.e., the fifty-hospital study program⁴ conducted by Kresge Eye Institute, Detroit, Michigan. Others were limited according to the sampling available in a particular locality. Some of the major findings may be briefly summarized.

Medical Findings

Most of the ophthalmological research concerned with blindness among little children was directed toward finding the cause of retrolental fibroplasia. In 1953, investigations in both Europe and the United States seem to point to the fact that oxygen played a significant role in the care of prematures who became blind. The findings of these studies indicated that:

- A) The incidence of retrolental fibroplasia seems to be in direct relation to the length of oxygen therapy,

⁴ V. E. Kinsey, J. T. Jacobus and F. M. Hemphill, "Retrolental Fibroplasia; Co-operative Study of Retrolental Fibroplasia and the Use of Oxygen." *A.M.A. Archives of Ophthalmology* (October 1956) pp. 481-543.

- B) The incidence is inverse to the weight of the baby or to the gestation time,
- C) The babies of certain birth weights, 1500 grams (3 pounds) or less, are apparently more vulnerable to the insult of oxygen.
- D) The oxygen content of the incubator may be controlled by 1) diluting the oxygen tank, 2) using cylinders containing lower content and 3) limiting the flow.

Research in this area also led to the recommendation that oxygen analyzers be used in all premature nurseries.

This knowledge, with the application of controls, produced an immediate drop in the incidence of blindness due to this condition. For example, in 1956, The New York State Commission for the Blind reported only three cases of children born prematurely in whom retrolental fibroplasia had developed. However, the total number of blind children of preschool age has not as yet reflected this dropping off, as might be expected, probably because of the delayed reporting of blindness in children throughout the United States as a whole. Moreover, it is questionable whether other states felt such a sudden decrease. Premature nursery care today prescribes no oxygen whenever possible, but there are those children who may nevertheless have to be given oxygen as life-saving therapy.

Social and Psychological Findings

In order to better understand the effect of knowledge of blindness upon the family and the child, let us turn for a minute to the family.

It is natural for parents to anticipate the birth of their child. Often this baby is longed for, planned for, and now he is to be a reality. Parents may hope and wish certain things for their child as a fulfillment, perhaps, for what they did not have themselves as they were growing up. It is natural for parents to have such plans and desires for their children.

The diagnosis of blindness in this baby comes as a shock to his parents. As has been indicated above, the baby in whom blindness

has developed may have been born prematurely, whereupon the parents may have had other grave concerns preceding the knowledge of blindness.

For the father, there may have been the anxiety as to whether his wife would live. He may have been told by the doctor, "We will try to pull her through but, if we do, we may be unable to save the baby." If both the mother and child live, the mother may be discharged from the hospital at the appropriate time, but she must leave the baby where he may receive medical care until such time as he weighs five and one-half pounds, generally considered the weight of a "full term" baby.

During this period, he may develop serious complications which again increase the concern not only of the baby's parents but of those persons responsible for his care.

The very act of the mother's leaving the hospital without her baby is in contrast to all the parents' expectations. The prolonged separation of the baby from his mother, plus the isolated sterile existence in the nursery, is thought by many authorities to have an effect upon the child in that he misses the close physical contact of his mother and the emotional warmth she naturally gives her baby. However, the subtle effect which this separation may have upon the mother, particularly in her feelings toward the baby, may be even more significant as far as the child's later development is concerned.

When the baby is discharged, perhaps some weeks later, the mother may be fearful about taking on the responsibility of caring for this child who has been for so long a time under expert care. She may even wonder about her own ability to keep this child well, healthy and growing. About this time, the ophthalmologist may have said, "Your child is blind."

Parents are individuals and each has own way of reacting to shock, sorrow and fear. There is hardly a family, however, which does not ask, "Why did this have to happen to us?" It takes time to reconcile sorrow and for some parents it may take longer than for others. Perhaps one of the most significant findings of the studies concerned with young blind children is the importance of the parents' initial attitudes toward the child and the consequent

effect of any change in parental feeling upon the development of the child.⁵

Some families show their reactions by not being able to do enough for the child. They may buy him more and more toys and are always looking for something "special" for a "blind child." They may dress the baby beyond his needs and furnish his room with every possible bit of equipment. In addition to showing their concern in material ways, they are not only ready to help the child when he needs assistance, but they may anticipate every move he makes and are always there first so that he does not have the chance to help himself. The baby in turn may be almost stifled with attention.

There are also those families that cannot think about the blindness in their child, and so the child is put off, and almost literally put out of their minds. They may wait, thinking that the child was born prematurely and when he is a little older he will show an interest in learning and then they will be able to give him the guidance which he needs. A modification of this type of attitude may be seen in the parent who becomes extremely active and concerned with blindness outside of his home. He serves on committees in parents' organizations, and accepts responsibilities that give him recognition—particularly in the eyes of those persons who share his mutual interest in blind children. He does not seem to be able to do enough in the great cause of blind babies, but his problems between himself and his own child may remain unresolved.

There are, fortunately, also those families who make a "good adjustment," often with the aid of professional help. They are able to think of their child in terms of his needs as a growing child though he is blind, and he is incorporated as much as possible into the total family life.

Needs of the Child

Much more is known about children today, particularly in relation to how they grow, develop and feel, than was recognized even a few years ago. Studies have been made of such details as the

⁵ M. Norris, P. J. Spaulding and F. H. Brodie, *Blindness in Children*. (University of Chicago Press, 1957)

foods which are most conducive to growth, the amount of sleep a child needs, the number of repetitions which may be required in the performance of a certain task before it is mastered, the vocabulary of the so-called "average" child at various age levels. Though certain norms of growth and development have been established, the experts who have set up these norms add that they are only guides since each child is an individual with his own potential and maximum as far as his total capacity is concerned, and with his own individual rate of growth. We are told, moreover, that growth does not proceed at an even rate, but may be most irregular. Again the rate depends upon the individual child.

These facts seem worthy of particular mention at this time in relation to young blind children. While the blind child is an infant, a mother treats him as she would any infant in her family. She protects him, keeps him from being hungry, and takes care of other physical needs that he may be comfortable. However, there may come a time when he is not sitting up as she expected he would at this age—particularly as compared with another baby in the neighborhood,—or perhaps he does not stand without support or learn to walk. If parents observe their baby is not developing as rapidly as anticipated, they may worry and confuse any retardation which is on a developmental level with mental retardation. It has been observed that at such time when a child is experiencing one of these periods of irregular growth and development and showing perhaps little progress, and his parents may show most anxiety and attribute the lack of development to the blindness, a mother may think her child will never walk without support, or that he will never be toilet-trained though she has "tried and tried." She may even think that someone else can teach her child better than she, particularly someone who knows blind children and has had experience "training" them, and again she begins to doubt her own abilities as far as the care of this child is concerned, even though she is his own mother.

Studies of blind children also support the generally accepted principle of the importance of a home environment for young children. A child should have a family and know the feeling which comes from a sense of belonging and of being a real part of the family. The importance of family life in our culture today and its

meaning to an individual has been described by many authorities, but probably most vividly by Dr. John Bowlby in his report to the World Health Organization on children observed in Europe and the United States over a period of years.⁶ He emphasizes the needs of the young infant for a “warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment.”

To quote further:

“The child needs to feel he is an object of pleasure and pride to his mother; the mother needs to feel an expansion of her own personality in the personality of her child; each needs to feel closely identified with the other. The mothering of a child is not something which can be arranged by roster, it is a live human relationship which alters the characters of both partners.”⁷

Dr. Bowlby proceeds to discuss the importance of the continuity of this relationship and the dangers if it is broken by such circumstances as repeated foster-home placements or institutional care in which the child is one of many and has no opportunity for a close association with a mother-figure.

All babies need to feel protected and surrounded, as it were, by safety. They enjoy being held or cuddled; they respond to a rocking, rhythmic motion. If a baby is blind, he must have more concrete evidence of his mother's closeness and her continuing love. He cannot see the expression on her face but he can feel the tenseness with which she picks him up, or the softness of her arms; he can tell how she feels by the way she quickly walks across the room or by the sound of her voice.

Another major finding concerns the normal need of the child who is blind to explore, to develop his own initiative, to learn through experience, and to know a feeling of his own ability, dignity and worth.

The blind child needs to feel a sense of independence and to know himself as a person. All children have initiative, in one

⁶ Dr. J. Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*. (World Health Organization: Monograph Series. 1952)

⁷ Ibid. p. 67.

degree or another, and are normally curious. They "get everything" as is said. For example, when a mother takes her child to a grocery store, he always wants to touch and handle everything he sees. If a child is blind he has the same feelings, desires and the same curiosity about his environment. The blind baby, for example, reaches toward the sound of a rattle which attracts him provided it is not so loud that it is frightening—whereupon he might show his good judgment by withdrawing in an effort to protect himself. He begins to explore a room by walking around the edge and touching the furniture. He handles a toy by putting it in his mouth where the taste buds of his tongue are extremely sensitive, as well as the tips of his fingers. Much of the learning of the preschool years normally takes place through vision and consequent imitation. If a child cannot see he must depend much more upon his natural desire to explore and upon his association with people who help to bring the world to him. These people are first his family. Therefore, again the significance of the quality of early family relationships as affecting the development of the young blind child must be emphasized.

Some persons may think he learns primarily through toys and play equipment and may ask if he does not need special materials because he is blind. Again studies of blind children of preschool age do not seem to uphold this assumption.

It has been observed that the blind child of preschool age generally plays with and enjoys practically the same materials as any other child of his stage of development. Children will have preferences in toys as well as in other things and parents may find that some toys have more appeal to their blind child than others. For example, any toy that has sound and is pleasing to the sense of touch will naturally be popular with a child who has a severe visual loss. Perhaps in choosing play materials one should ask: "What can he do with this?" Often a toy will have a visual appeal, but there will be little that any child can really do with it, either because of its weak construction or its limitation of use.

Sometimes a child who is blind does not seem to play with toys or materials in the way which we might anticipate. He may not show his appreciation in the same way as a child does with good vision. Often blind children need to be *shown* the possibilities in

toys and materials, rather than *told*. The association which a child has with an adult in such instances may greatly enhance his appreciation for the toy and make his play just that much more enjoyable to him.

Parents have often reported behavior in their children which has been disturbing to them as, for example, the repeated activity of opening and closing doors, bouncing on beds, swaying of the body or head. It can give a child a wonderful sense of achievement if he can swing a door three times his size and feel that he has control over it. Some authorities suggest that these behavior patterns often observed in young blind children have their origin in the child's initial desire to explore and to understand his environment as well as to learn his own capabilities. As he experiences success and knows what he is capable of as a person, many of these behavior patterns have seemed to disappear. The blind child needs to know he is a person in his own right. He should be able to refer to himself as "I." This feeling seems to come most easily when the child has been given opportunity to know a sense of independence and his own capabilities.

Educational Trends

One of the most important findings of these studies is the knowledge in relation to the potential of the blind child which, in turn, is affecting not only the attitude of parents toward their blind children but attitudes of the community toward blindness in general. Perhaps in no instance has the blind child been able to show his own capabilities and potential as effectively as in his participation in programs with other children.

Experience seems to show that there is no better way for the child to learn about "the world of people and the world of things," to use a borrowed expression, than through *participation* which, again, normally begins with the family. The child learns in association with adults from every-day experiences: i.e., going shopping with mother, trying on new shoes, visiting with the postman.

One excellent method of giving a preschool child new experiences is through a nursery school situation. Nursery school attendance, however, is not essential to a child's general development in the preschool years though it may enrich and embroider a child's

daily life. The nursery school, moreover, should not be expected to be a substitute for what the home normally gives the child but rather a supplement to the home-life of the child.

In an effort to give the blind child a group experience, many communities have set up nursery schools solely for blind children within the last ten years. Often these schools have been small because of the blind population of the community and children have been able to receive individual attention which has been important to their development. Often these schools were established with the purpose of providing a group experience for the child that he might be better prepared for a later educational program, hopefully with sighted children. Later it was often observed that this type of experience limited to association with children who were similarly blind did not necessarily assist the child in his social skills or enable him to function more successfully in programs for sighted children. For some children, however, the nursery school offering therapeutic service to a limited number has been most appropriate.

It has also been observed that many families have preferred to use the regular existing nursery school facilities for their blind child when he could profit from a group experience, because of the additional benefits accruing to the child from association with children who see. Children do not want to be "different." It has been observed that in such settings the blind child tends to think of himself as being like the others—which he is, except for the fact that he cannot see. At the same time, he learns to recognize and accept his physical limitation in an atmosphere of acceptance by the group. Moreover, it is helpful to the parents, as far as their own attitudes are concerned, to see their child participating like other children in such group activities. Many authorities feel that the attendance of blind children in regular nursery schools has been a real factor in the integration of blind children in public school systems throughout the country, a trend which is having great impetus today.

It is recognized that there will be some children who, for one reason or another, cannot participate in this fashion. Therefore, there may be a real need for some kind of a study center for these children who require special treatment and understanding. Gen-

erally speaking, however, as to equipment and teaching skills, the blind child does not need anything over and above what a good nursery school offer any preschool age. When he grows older, to be sure, he will be learning braille and needing other kinds of skills, but right now in the preschool years, he is a child growing like any other child.

Services

Most of the service today in behalf of the young child who is blind is directed toward his parents who are generally considered the primary agents in providing the environment or the "climate," as it were, in which the young child is living and growing.

When parents are first informed of their child's visual defect, and most people agree that it is better for them to know as soon as possible, they naturally feel at a loss. Families who have experienced this situation have said they were too stunned at first to be able to ask the ophthalmologist the questions which later came to their minds.

Parents should feel they can talk freely with the doctor, without taking too much of his time. They should be given enough information about the diagnosis to help them in their own understanding of the condition. For example, it can help relieve a parent's feeling of responsibility for the blindness to know that a condition such as retrolental fibroplasia is not congenital. Parents must also, in turn, be able to interpret the condition to their relatives, friends and sometimes the community.

Parents not only look to their ophthalmologist and pediatrician for medical help, but they often expect the doctor to be able to give them information pertaining to other available services and educational resources.

Some persons are instinctively able to carry out their responsibilities as parents. On the other hand, most parents can profit from being able to share their problems and questions with someone who shows empathy and understanding. Parents have repeatedly said that it would have been so helpful had they been able to talk with some authoritative person about the medical diagnosis and their own feelings toward their child and toward blindness in general. Again, it has been observed that casework service, which

helps parents in their understanding of the condition and which supports them in their natural desires to do for the child is most helpful and should be available as early as possible after the knowledge of the diagnosis.

All parents are eager to do whatever is best for their children; all parents of growing children may have questions at some time or another. If a family has a child who does not see, they may have even more questions, particularly if some of their so-called "problems" (i.e., eating, toilet trainings, etc.) appear to be accentuated in their blind child.

It is helpful to many persons to be able to talk about their blind child's development with someone who can interpret their child's needs, first as a child, then in relation to his handicap. Often parents need only the reassurance that as a family they are doing more than anyone else can do, and that their child is progressing well as compared with other children who have a similar visual loss. This kind of information and supportive help is often available to families, through such resources as home counseling programs, case-work service offered by family and children's agencies, institutes for parents, nursery schools, parent organizations, etc. In many communities, this service is available on a state-wide basis through tax-supported and/or voluntary agencies.

There is probably no one all-over answer to questions of which kind of service is most helpful. Many families are able to benefit from one or more types, or all, that may be available in a particular community. It is suggested, however, that in providing service the following points be kept in mind:

1. That the blind child is first a child and can benefit from practically all the services which are primarily for children and their families, i.e., casework service (i.e., through child welfare and family service agencies) nursery schools, child guidance clinics, well-baby clinics, etc.
2. That any service, to be of value, must recognize the blind child as an individual, with the same needs as any growing child, and his parents also as individuals who react in their present experience in relation to, or in terms of all their life experiences up to this time.

3. That service should be conducted by persons who have the professional qualifications which enable them to serve blind children and their parents adequately and appropriately.

Present Needs

It is gratifying to know the number of children who have been born during the last eighteen years who, with little or no sight, are functioning well today in the many different types of educational programs existing throughout the country.

The education of the young child has always been a first concern of parents from the moment when they learned of the child's blindness. If by chance they observed that their child seemed to be developing more slowly than anticipated, they may have feared a complication of mental retardation and sought some evaluation.

Most authorities feel that an evaluation of the blind child during his preschool years should be made with real reservation, or possibly be discouraged until the child is of school age because of the limitations of the present psychometric instruments. Not only are the tests themselves often lacking in validity but the child's performance, moreover, may be conditioned by the amount of opportunity he has had for learning and by his past experience. It is recommended that evaluations be based, for the most part, upon the measured social maturity of the child and the observations of the pediatrician, ophthalmologist, social worker, parents and others who know the child. Not only is there a need for an instrument for measuring the performance of the child but there is a need for much greater knowledge concerning the *early* development of any child without vision.

An evidence of our professional lack of knowledge is the number of children who do not seem to be functioning as well as anticipated. Just how great the incidence of blind children with multiple handicaps may be is not known, but it is apparently relatively and needlessly high. A very real concern today is the number of children who are blind and cerebral palsied. In some instances the child is mildly affected, in others the cerebral palsied condition is the child's major handicap with his visual acuity undeterminable.

There are also those children who are slower to develop be-

cause of a mental deficiency. However, current research points to the fact that probably the incidence of mental deficiency is no greater among a sampling of children who are blind than among children who are sighted.⁸ Moreover, other studies, notably the work of Samuel Hayes, indicate that there is no greater incidence of mental retardation among children who are blind from retrolental fibroplasia than among children blinded from other eye diseases.⁹

There is, however, a group of children who present characteristics which are baffling to professional persons. Many of these children have been diagnosed as "damaged," "psychotic," "schizophrenic," etc. Some of these children of school age have already been dropped from educational programs of various types and are now appearing in programs for disturbed children. All are retarded.

Study of case material indicates that these children come from a variety of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. Often they have been the victims of unusual and complicated circumstances. In many instances the children have been in a series of foster home placements, in one or more educational programs, and are often known to several social agencies. Again, these children are often at home in communities where no appropriate service seems available, or they have been committed to institutions for mental defectives.

It seems that the most successful therapy is being focused upon helping the child have a better concept of self. Children who have been seen in treatment are often from families where the child has had little or no opportunity to sense a feeling of his own personal worth. Many of these children have never experienced a close, warm and continuing relationship with adults. A limited number of these children are being served in therapeutic and residential situations. However, probably a greater number are being treated in clinical settings on an individual basis where the therapy is generally directed toward helping to build in the child a realization of personal worth rather than toward treating any symptom such as poor motility, lack of speech, etc.

⁸ Norris, op. cit.

⁹ S. P. Hayes, *First Regional Conference on Mental Measurements of the Blind*. (Watertown: Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind, 1952).

Medical science has probably conquered retrolental fibroplasia which has been the leading cause of blindness in infants in the last few years. Unfortunately, however, there are still children being born for whom there is little hope for any useful vision. There are also those children who develop ocular difficulties for which medical science has no answer at present. These children present a challenge to all professional persons interested in children's services. In the last few years a variety of programs have appeared in an effort to meet the needs of the child and of his parents. The child himself has shown us his capability and potential. Still there is much to learn from these children and, hopefully, research will proceed concerned not only with blindness itself but with the development of all young children, which will lead to more definite knowledge and, in consequence, increasingly more effective service.

The Role of the Residential School in the Education of Blind Children

Address delivered at the Northwest Conference on the
Education of Children Who Are Blind, Portland, Ore-
gon, October 24-26, 1957.

BY BERTHOLD LOWENFELD, PH.D.

When I started to think about the assignment which was given to me in connection with this conference, I turned to a dictionary to find out what the term "role" actually means. This is the definition which I found: "A part, or character, performed by an actor in a drama." I interpret, therefore, my assignment as a mandate to discuss the residential school as an actor (the word coming from the verb "act") in the drama which is taking place during these years when we have a truly dramatic increase in the number of children who need to be educated as children who are blind.

To stay for just a while longer with the simile of the actor, any actor has to consider his role from two points of view. One is that of internal characterization, that is, how should he perform in order to portray as well as possible the personality, the inner forces which move the hero himself. The other is that of external relationships, or in other words, what is the give and take between the hero and his environment and how does that influence his status. I propose to discuss with you these two elements in the role which the residential school plays in the contemporary scene of the education of the blind: First, the *intra-actions*, what are the inner characteristics of the residential school and the driving forces which produced what we now see as the residential school setting; Second, the *inter-actions*, what role does the residential school play in connection with other educational provisions for children who are blind.

The Intra-Actions of the Residential School

When the first residential schools were founded in Europe and in the United States, no other way of educating blind children seemed feasible than separating them from the seeing in special residential schools. At that time, the blind were to a large extent set apart from the rest of the people, not only for their education but also for their subsequent life. In Germany, for instance, blind children entered the residential school and upon graduation transferred from one building to another where handicrafts kept them productively occupied until they became too old to work and were moved to still another building, on the same grounds, for the aged blind—a kind of “cradle to grave security.” In this scheme of things, the residential school was a self-sufficient and self-centered provision. In many parts of the world, it has not yet moved far beyond this stage. In the United States, however, societal forces have influenced the residential school development and quite radically changed its former character. Of course, not all residential schools reacted with equal response and equal responsibility to these forces. Some are still on the more traditional side with policies dating back to the older days of self-sufficiency, while others are more progressive and more responsive to the impact of social changes. As I see it, there are mainly three forces which influenced and still influence the residential school development: 1) The increasing integration of the blind into society; 2) The supremacy of public school education in America; 3) The recognition of the importance of the family life for the individual child.

TREND TOWARD INTEGRATION

No residential school can overlook the fact that blind children must be brought up to take their rightful places in society, with the privileges and responsibilities of all citizens. Some schools believe that they can do this best by retaining their pupils completely in an environment which prepares them for their future life but does not expose them to it. Many schools, however, seek every opportunity to give their pupils experiences which they would have if they were growing up in their home communities. They take their children out to be together with other children whenever an opportunity can be found for it, and they bring other children

into the school as often as this seems the natural thing to do. Church and Sunday School attendance, scouting, competitive and other sport activities, and social affairs are arranged to bring blind and seeing youngsters together. In all these efforts, it must be understood that having blind children and seeing children together is by itself not necessarily "integration." The value of this coeducation depends on its emotional result. Some children will derive greater feelings of security in the accepting environment of a residential school and will need the development of these feelings of security before they become ready to join seeing children successfully. Other children may have been brought up in an environment which has succeeded in giving them feelings of security and are, therefore, readily able to join a group of seeing children for kindergarten or school experiences.

An increasing number of residential schools recognize that it is their responsibility not only to prepare children for integration with the seeing, but also to assist them in their first experiences in such an integration. For this reason, they arrange to have their senior high school pupils attend regular public schools while they live at the residential school. Some schools have only selected students go to the public schools, others send only their twelfth graders; the California School for the Blind has, for the past eight years, sent all pupils of the three senior high school grades to public schools to continue their education with seeing students. With better supervisory assistance available to pupils of all grades in the public schools, more youngsters return to the schools of their home communities whenever they themselves or our school feel that they can take part in the public school education of their home community. The availability of funds for itinerant teachers, for transportation and for reader service in the public schools of California makes it increasingly possible for us in the residential school to release pupils to their parents whenever we feel that they are ready to take part in a public school setting on whatever grade level this may be.

THE INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

Perhaps nowhere else but in the United States has the public school system assumed such a universal role as the fundamental

instrument of education. Our parochial and private schools have acknowledged this by following to a large extent the same basic course of study which is followed by the public schools. This idea was by no means always accepted in residential schools for the blind. At a meeting of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind in 1872, a strong opposition developed against a resolution recommending that schools for the blind "should be conducted as nearly as possible according to the manner and methods of seeing schools." At present, practically all schools for the blind follow essentially the same course of study which is followed in the public schools. Some subjects resisted adoption by schools for the blind longer, as for instance, chemistry and physics, while others were accepted in schools for the blind before public schools included them in their curriculum, as for instance, typewriting. It goes without saying that while the course of study is the same in residential and in public schools, the methods used in teaching are different and adapted to the needs of blind children. This identity in the courses of study makes it possible to transfer students from residential schools to public schools, an advantage which is quite important at a time when many residential schools must cooperate with public schools in order to provide education for the large number of blind pupils due to the retrolental fibroplasia "inflation."

It should also be mentioned that most residential schools for the blind are now administratively placed in state departments of education which makes them actually an integral part of the public school system. This was not always the case because many residential schools were under the administration of a variety of other departments than those of education, and some of them still are.

IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY LIFE

The vital role of family life has always been recognized in a rather general way. The more specific values of family living for the individual have been brought to attention only in the more immediate past and present. This is particularly true for the role which maternal relationship plays in the life of the young child. Comparatively recent research dealing with severely disturbed children has revealed the importance of "maternal deprivation"

as the main causative factor. Children who are unwanted, unloved and rejected are severely damaged in their ego development. This is particularly true for the very young child. Children from three to five years of age are considered less vulnerable with vulnerability diminishing even more after that age. A number of factors are said to be important in determining vulnerability even in older children. Among them are: length separation, preparation of the child for the separation, and love and understanding provided by those who are in charge of the child away from home.

Under the influence of these findings and their wide acceptance, residential schools have broken away from the attitude widely held in the past that "parents are the worst enemy of their blind child." Close cooperation with the parents is now stressed, and every effort is made to assist those parents who do not appear to have desirable attitudes toward their blind child. Services for preschool blind children, which concentrate upon helping parents to provide for their child a loving and accepting family environment, are greatly contributing toward a better emotional climate for blind children in their family homes. Most schools for the blind show this changed attitude toward parents by their desire to have children spend as much time as possible with their families, either by accepting them as day pupils, or by having them spend as many weekends as possible with their families. They also have parent organizations and stress friendly and helpful parent-school relationship. Within the residential school, increasing attention is paid to secure well-trained and emotionally well-suited house-parents who are in charge of the blind children when they are not in class. I am sure there is still much that can be done to improve parent-school relationship, but the problem of cooperation between the home and the school is in general one which schools are just now beginning to face and have still to solve.

The Inter-Actions of the Residential School

The problem of the interrelationship between the residential school and other agencies concerned with the education of blind children became acute only at the beginning of the Twentieth Century when the first day school classes for the blind were founded. During the first few years of the initial growth of the public

school classes, there was quite a lively discussion about the functions of both means of educating blind children. During the years preceding 1948, the number of children attending public school classes reached a plateau with about 10 per cent of all blind children in the United States attending them. The residential schools and the rather limited number of public school classes coexisted without any particular relationship except for an occasional flare-up of discussions. The public school movement for the education of blind children has, in the past ten years, gained impressive force so that Mr. M. Robert Barnett, executive director of the American Foundation for the Blind, reported at the Oslo Conference of Educators of Blind Youth in 1957 "that a conservative estimate indicates that approximately 40 per cent of the total school population of about 10,000 blind children are in public school systems." Percentages vary from state to state, but it may be of interest that in California about 25 per cent of the blind children are educated in the residential school, while about 75 per cent are attending public schools in their home communities. On the other hand, there are still some states which rely almost exclusively upon the residential school as the only instrumentality for the education of their blind children.

The growth of the public school education movement for blind children and the discrepancies found between various states indicate that there must be a good deal of diversity of opinion concerning the place and effectiveness of the two programs. Indeed, I do not have to report to you that there are people who believe that the residential school has the only successful program for the education of blind children, while others believe that the public schools, and only they, can provide the best facility. The fact that both forms have produced well-adjusted and successful graduates belies the opinions of extremists on both sides. I propose that we disregard them for the purpose of this discussion and approach the problem from a more reasonable point of view that tries to determine in which way residential schools as well as public schools can best meet the needs of blind children.

Let me raise the problem by asking a question which I believe goes right to the heart of the matter: Which children should be placed in the residential school? Before giving even a tentative

answer to this question, I should like to stress that I can give you only my personal opinion, but I believe, in view of the lack of any scientific evidence, we shall have to deal largely with personal opinions on both sides of what I believe is, or should be, a continuum and not dichotomy of services.

Obviously, *blind children for whom no local services are available* will be logical candidates for admission to a residential school. Such local services may not be available because of the small number of blind children, or even the absence of any other blind child in the community; because of a lack of understanding on the part of the public school authorities of their responsibility to provide education for blind children; or because of a lack of success in public relations which might have impressed the community with the importance of providing education for blind children in their public schools. Finally, there may also be a sincere conviction, debatable as it may be, that the residential school alone should take care of the education of blind children and no other place. In the years during which the retrolental fibroplasia children will swell the number of school-age blind children, many more local communities will have sufficient numbers of blind children to justify a special teacher for them. This teacher may serve as a resource or as an itinerant teacher. When the retrolental fibroplasia inflation has passed through the schools, it can be foreseen that many communities will no longer have a sufficient number of children to continue special services. Whether blind children from such communities will in the future go to residential schools, be educated by itinerant teachers, or be served by both kinds of services, is something that only the future will tell.

There are and will be blind children who grow up in *families*, which for a variety of reasons, are *not desirable places for them*. Broken homes, homes that have lost either one or both parents because of death or other reasons, homes where the child has been rejected and the parents cannot be helped to gain a more salutary attitude, may make it more beneficial for the child to be placed away from home. If foster parents can be found, the blind child may attend a public school provided special services are available there. If not, placement in a residential school and temporary arrangements for foster home care during vacations may be chosen.

There are also those blind children who, either for environmental reasons or for reasons within themselves, are *not in a state* which would make them good prospects for *public school placement*. This may be the case if the child has not acquired feelings of security and self-confidence which would enable him to be successful in integrating with seeing children. Also, there are some blind children who either have or appear to have an additional handicap such as mental retardation, a hearing loss, or other conditions which would make it difficult for them to be admitted to a public school. For some of these children, the residential school setting may be used as a diagnostic medium, and for others the special provisions which can be made in a residential school may be the only ones which offer them educational opportunities. Lately, we have been confronted with a number of young blind children who are obviously emotionally disturbed. Some of them we were able to help with educational therapy, others we were unable to help with the skills which our teachers and counselors are prepared to apply, so that we had to refer them to psychiatric therapy.

Finally, there are those children whose *parents believe that the residential school is a better place* for them than the public school. Obviously, they have just as much right to have their child placed according to their wish as the parents of those who believe that the public school is the better place for their child. Whether this determination is based on a comparison of the available residential school and public school facilities or upon a predetermined conviction of the parents in favor of one or the other instrumentality, is immaterial. They are the parents and their preferences should be considered in their child's placement.

Of the four groups which I have tried to describe—children for whom no local services are available, children whose family situations are not desirable places for them, children who are not good prospects for public school placement, and children whose parents want them to go to a residential school—the first group will most likely contribute the largest number of students to a residential school enrollment. This will, of course, be only the case if both, residential school and public school facilities, are given a chance to develop.

Since this meeting is taking place in the state of Oregon, I can-

not close my observations without discussing for a short while what has become known as the Oregon Plan. Many have reported about it, and I myself did so back in 1946.¹ At that time, I mentioned the three essential principles in this plan as follows: First, any child who can be educated in the public schools should not be institutionalized or even segregated. Second, the residential school for the blind has as its aim the rehabilitation of visually handicapped children for public school education and is not interested in keeping children any longer than necessary. Third, each child has a right to individualized services, (a) in regard to optimum restoration of sight, and (b) in regard to use of aids which will conserve and safeguard his sight.

At that time the residential school, the Oregon State School for the Blind in Salem, under the superintendency of its beloved and respected head, Mr. Walter Dry, fulfilled most of these functions in connection with an itinerant teacher service provided jointly with the State Department of Education. Many of the features of this plan, and of a similar one which was developed in the state of New Jersey, have been taken over by other states with a redistribution of responsibilities. In California, for instance, the State Department of Education has on its staff, in the Bureau of Special Education, a consultant in the education of visually handicapped children who has two supervisors to assist in her work. This consultant is the person who gives advice and assistance (financial and otherwise) to the local public school systems which provide education for visually handicapped children. She also helps those communities which want to establish such services. In general, parents are responsible for the medical care of their children, but the California School for the Blind has established a cooperative relationship with the School of Optometry of the University of California to whom it refers on the advice of its ophthalmologist those children who need refractions and can be helped by special optical aids. The restoration of sight program is carried out in conjunction with the Bureau of Crippled Children's Services, an agency which also provides other services for the physical rehabilitation of children. Thus, services which in Oregon were performed for a

¹ Berthold Lowenfeld, "The Oregon Plan." *Outlook for the Blind* (March 1946) 8p.

comparatively small number of children in one residential school setup, have to be divided among a number of agencies when larger numbers of children are served and duplication of services is to be avoided.

I have tried to discuss with you the role of the residential school and in closing should like to add one more observation. Provisions for children in general and specific ones for blind children cannot be static. They have changed in the past and must retain flexibility in order to fulfill their task in a changing society. For this reason, what I have said today may need revision tomorrow, and I should like to express the hope that all those who are concerned with the education of blind children may keep, in addition to an open heart, also an open mind so that they can live up to the challenge which the education of blind children offers not only now but also in the future.

The Role of the Public School System in the Education of Blind with Sighted Children

Address delivered at the Northwest Conference on the
Education of Children Who are Blind, Portland, Oregon,
October 24-26, 1957.

BY CLARICE E. MANSHARDT

Our Program and Its Philosophy

The education of blind with sighted children in a public school setting is really not a new program since it had its beginning in the United States shortly after the turn of the century. It is, however, relatively new to our community and, because of this fact, the staff and I have done a considerable amount of thinking about our responsibility. Each of us has attended conferences and summer courses in teacher preparation centers to secure some preparation in the education of the blind which seemed necessary in order to adapt that which we felt we knew as a result of our previous training and experience in the education of sighted children.

Our program was inaugurated six years ago, and we began with one qualified teacher of blind children in a resource room which served seven pupils. We now have an enrollment of forty-six pupils in a school population of 3,800, with five qualified teachers of blind children and the cooperative teaching and administrative service of all those who come in contact with the children who are blind. It should be noted here that the Temple City Unified Schools serve the educational needs of blind children from a number of surrounding school districts as part of a cooperative program of education for physically handicapped children.

Ours is a rapidly growing community and, therefore, we are faced with many challenges as we attempt to plan for the education of an already large population which seems to make room for an

increasing number of children during each school year. Where once we observed orange groves, we now see large housing projects. Like all school systems, our school building program and budget to provide the addition of the right kind of teachers met with difficulty in keeping pace with our population increase. We consider all this, however, a cooperative school and community responsibility. Families with blind children who move into our community have the same rights to our service that all families have, and we hope that they are able to share in our problems and also the philosophy of our educational program.

Like most school systems, we make a serious effort to call on our community resources with all of the problems which are ours, and when it is necessary and advisable, we take advantage of those resources outside our community and even outside of our state. We are challenged and inspired to learn as much as we can about the needs and procedures in solving problems of all children. When families need a service which it seems impossible for us to provide, we accept the challenge of working with them in finding another school placement. This may be in another program comparable to ours, or it may be in an entirely different type of facility such as a child guidance clinic, a social agency or an institution. Also, when families because of economic or other reasons feel it necessary to move to another locality, we stand ready to help them find other facilities where their child might receive the type of education that is important to the family and that we feel is appropriate to their child. So long as these families live in our community, we feel some responsibility to help them, as our fellow citizens.

The role of the public school in the education of blind children is not unique. It seems to me that the same responsibility rests upon the public school for children who are blind as that for all children. It is our charge to provide for the maximum growth of each child in terms of his individual potential.

TYPES OF PROGRAMS

The *pattern* of organization of a program of education for children who are blind is not of great importance except as it serves to best meet the needs of a particular group of children. These patterns vary within the public school framework. There

are probably four basic forms of organization in use today in the education of blind children. They may be described briefly as follows:

1. The day school program or braille class, as it was called in the early programs, was more likely to be similar to the self-contained classroom in which all of the children remained with one teacher almost the entire school day. This was a cautious approach to the education of these children and has been referred to in our literature as the "segregated program." In general, this program is practiced today in some of the nursery school programs for blind children that have been developed in certain sections of the country. There have also been some classes which have been developed for blind children who have presented additional problems and, since there was not a comparable program for sighted children, there was little or no chance to provide experiences with sighted children. Unfortunately, it must be said that there are still some school systems in this country that have failed to develop programs which do provide the very necessary opportunities for the blind and sighted children to even know each other, much less to participate with each other in their regular classes. Where there has been insufficient administrative planning and there have been teachers with little or no qualifications to develop programs which provide for education of blind with sighted children in line with their abilities and needs, naturally, limited programs have resulted. Like all movements in education, we get returns on our investment if we are able to provide what is required in all phases of our programs.
2. The cooperative program or contact plan was naturally the second type of program to emerge from the early beginnings in this area of education. This program has been defined in *The Pine Brook Report*¹ as—"one in which the

¹ *The Pine Brook Report*—National Work Session on the Education of the Blind With the Sighted. (New York: American Foundation for the Blind Group Reports No. 2, 1954)

blind is enrolled with a teacher of blind children in a special room from which he goes to the regular classrooms for a portion of his school day. In this plan the special room becomes his home room from which his program planning stems, in cooperation with the regular classroom teachers." From this definition it is apparent that there was a desire to achieve greater functioning of the blind children with the sighted children, but there still seemed to be the feeling that the specialist teacher should assume the greater share of the responsibility for planning in the education of each blind child. The regular teaching staff simply cooperated by having the children participate in the various classes but at the suggestion and discretion of the specialist teacher of blind children.

3. The integrated program or resource room grew when school systems recognized the opportunities which should result when blind and sighted children profit equally in the experiences which they can share with their peers. It gave the regular teacher the opportunity to develop for blind children the same educational program that is available to all of the children in the various grade levels or groups. It provides for the same amount of service from the specialist teacher by using her as a resource to the regular teacher, to the blind children, and to all others who may have problems specifically related to the education of each blind child. This plan is one which is more likely to be found in the newer programs which have been organized within the last eight or ten years, and it is gratifying to note that where some of the school systems with years of experience have re-examined their programs for blind children they have found that they were able to develop integrated programs which did bring greater educational opportunities to all of the children. The integrated program has also been defined in *The Pine Brook Report* as—"one in which the blind child is enrolled in the regular classroom. Available to him and to his regular teachers is a full-time qualified teacher of blind children and also a resource room. The regular teachers turn to the teacher of

blind children for assistance in planning the child's program, for guidance in adapting the classroom procedures, and for providing, as necessary, specialized instruction appropriate to the blind child's needs."

4. The program which provides itinerant teacher service to the individual blind child who remains in his local school district is one which has been practiced for some time by certain schools with the help of outside agencies or departments of education. It, however, has received much more attention in recent years when various school systems have examined it with the idea of making the service available to a greater number of children. It has been practiced in many places with junior and senior high school pupils who either live in very large cities or move to rural communities and need the service of a teacher of blind children or a person who acts as a consultant to the children and their school personnel. At least two states—Oregon and New Jersey developed this program at the state level. Certain other states have followed this practice in more recent years. In certain sections of the country, there have been many children with very limited vision who have attended the elementary schools with very little or no help outside the regular school staff. Blind children in large numbers have been enrolled in kindergartens in the various states, but until quite recently there were few itinerant teachers serving children in the elementary school grades from either local or state levels of administration. In many of our communities, it should be remembered, school officials were petitioned by families to accept blind children in localities where there was no program already available. Perhaps the fact that these children seemed to function effectively with such a small amount of help caused city and state administrators to consider the possibility of serving more children if the program were set up with qualified staff and sufficient equipment and facilities. *The Pine Brook Report* has defined the itinerant teacher service type of program as—"one in which the blind child is enrolled in the regular class in his home school where his

needs are met through the cooperative efforts of the regular teacher and those of the itinerant teacher qualified to offer this special service."

Many shades and variations of these basic patterns undoubtedly exist but the prime requisite is that the arrangement of the educational planning fit the needs of the children involved.

The School System's Responsibility

The public school has a role of responsibility in the determination of the basic philosophy it holds with regard to children with special needs. I would hope that this philosophy would be based on the premise that these children are *first* of all children with the same basic needs as all other children. Further, that their potential as productive and accepted members of society is not only great but the school's responsibility to release. Within such a framework the public school must also realistically diagnose and understand the special needs occasioned by blindness and/or any other similar factor and attempt to serve these efficiently.

In a more specific area I believe public education must assume leadership in securing adequate financial support for special education so that effective planning may be implemented with needed personnel and equipment. Effective teaching requires a reasonable class load. In the type of program we have in Temple City (integrated and some itinerant), I believe a maximum load for a resource teacher is approximately six.

The public school is morally responsible to accept blind children upon the same policy basis as all children. I recall an instance last year of a preschool child at one of our schools who became well known in the neighborhood and around the school. He was obviously seriously retarded. In the lunchroom, etc., I heard much speculation about "which kindergarten teacher do you suppose will get HIM!" I didn't hear anyone questioning his eventual school placement! Of course, it's true he *wasn't* blind—! Are we consistent? Had he been blind, I submit there still should be no question.

Administrators within public schools, I feel, need to encourage the teamwork approach in developing the best possible program

of education. The resource or special teacher, the regular classroom teacher, the principal, guidance person—none can work effectively in isolation. Education at its best for blind and sighted children is everybody's business, from custodian and clerk to superintendent and board of education member.

Further, I think administration must continually strive to develop the kind and amounts of security, morale and professional growth that virtually demands a highly creative and insightful quality of teaching that not only effectively imparts skills but modifies and encourages the positive development of personality. Further, we should be alert (and eternally grateful) to giving every support to the teacher whose sensitivity to and acceptance of children—where and as they are—makes possible learning and growing situations in which boys and girls experience and show concern for others.

I had a delightful experience in a kindergarten the other day. It was milk or nutrition time. The class rules say "we all sit at the round tables to drink milk." In the science corner, there was a small table with an aquarium on it. Donny, a little (seeing) lad who had thus far used little if any speech of any sort and who made one wonder if there were sufficient "cylinders" to ever produce any really rational behavior, had discovered the fish bowl and indicated he wanted his milk at the little table with the fish,—at least, he refused to budge. Several alert members of the group tried to correct the situation and some evaluative discussion as to "what's fair" etc. began. The teacher went over to the vocal group and, sitting down with them, helped them see that since it was such a thrill to the class and to Donny for him to show interest for the first time in something—that perhaps, for Donny, this day, the rule could be waived. One five-year-old got so enthused with helping that she went over and started teaching Donny to say "fish." After many attempts, with Donny making superhuman efforts, he finally came forth with "fith." His little teacher tried valiantly to get him to say *fish* but Donny huffed and puffed and still said "fith." Finally, she went over to the teacher, saying "Please, may I have my turn to sit in your lap? I'm so *tired* trying to teach Donny to say "fish." As I reflected upon this revealing episode, I can but say—let's wish for more teachers who have a "lap sitting" time!

Our Responsibility as Teachers and Staff Counts

If I may refer to our own program again, I would like to suggest that our staff, which includes all of the teachers concerned, still feels the need to engage in considerable discussions and re-evaluation of our service to blind children. It is gratifying at times to hear comments from the group, to the effect that, "we feel sure that our program has been strengthened," "we know that if there were no blind children in our school system next year, every resource teacher could return to the regular classroom a better teacher," or, when we were considering the employment of a teacher who was blind for one of our regular eighth grade classes, we found ourselves saying, "if we believe in a school program for children who are blind, don't we also believe in a program which would employ qualified teachers who are blind?" We recognize that there are many dangers in oversimplification of problems and also in too many generalizations concerning attitudes and the social impact of blindness. Those of us who are attempting to act as resource persons to the regular staff must continue to be aware of these cautions and explore our feelings and respect the feelings of others. Some of our resource teachers have considered the time when it might be possible to return to the regular classroom for a year, to teach the large group of sighted children with one or two blind children as a means of greater understanding of the role of the regular teacher. Other teachers have talked of engaging in some research in which we involve other agencies. We are quite sure that there are many more agencies and organizations which we should utilize in our program and, as our program grows, we have on our agenda the exploration of these possibilities. We want to work more with the families of our children and, as we move into the secondary schools with more children, we are recognizing particularly the importance of the community as a rich resource for the families of these children. We know there are some problems here, and we hope we will have the ability and the ingenuity to solve many of them.

We recognize specific needs in our secondary school program, particularly in the area of development of orientation and mobility skills in each of the pupils as they move out into a more

complicated environment. We must either provide for this on a part-time or full-time basis in our own school system, or we must secure it outside the school. We also recognize that, as we are able to help the families of the children and the children themselves, we will consider more carefully the recreation facilities of the community and encourage greater functional activities outside the school program.

This relatively new program in our public school system has given us additional opportunity to grow and to look even more critically at our general educational program than might have been evident had we not broadened our growth to be one of our strongest and most important roles as teachers and administrators who believe in the potential of all children.

Finally, I think that public education is a partner to a great many agencies in helping to chart better paths in a new frontier—that of the conservation and better utilization of human resources.

I submit to you that we must continually evaluate and refine and be ever ready to make necessary changes so that we may serve in releasing each child, blind or sighted, to the glory of achieving his own place of productivity and happiness in the world of tomorrow.

The Itinerant Teaching Program for Blind Children

Address delivered at The First National Conference sponsored by The National Braille Club on Techniques of Transcribing and Recording Text Books for Blind, Students, New York Guild for the Jewish Blind, October 14, 1957.

BY JOSEPHINE L. TAYLOR

In the itinerant teaching program, the blind child is enrolled in his neighborhood school with special services brought to him.

Although the literature pertaining to the history of education of the blind gives reference to individual blind pupils who attended schools with those with normal vision, development of specific programs for this type of education extends back only about forty years and is chiefly limited to education of blind children in the United States.

The following anecdote shows the efforts made by some residential schools for the blind to extend the facilities available to their senior high school pupils. In 1910, the superintendent of the Washington State School for the Blind reported to the staff and some of the older pupils of the school some of the discussions that had been held at a recent convention of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind. Among these was a description of a program that had been developed at the New York State School for the Blind at Batavia where some of the more capable blind students were continuing to live at the residential school, but were receiving some of their academic program in the local high school. The school for the blind enriched the curriculum through instruction in crafts, music, athletics, etc. and provided special materials and equipment as well as counseling services to the individual students and the public high school personnel.

Among those in the Washington School who heard about the

Batavia program there was a young high school freshman by the name of George F. Meyer. Young George recognized that in the local public high school he could receive a much broader and more stimulating experience than he could get in the school for the blind where there were, at the time, only a handful of high school pupils. He decided that if the Batavia boys could do it, he could also. The Washington superintendent pointed out that their school was a great distance from the public high school and there was no way to transport George into town. George had walked to town before with partially-seeing boys as guides. He set out to learn the way himself. The problem of braille textbooks and reading service was brought up. The superintendent could not add this to the work of the already overburdened staff of his school. When at the end of the year the answer was still "no," young George announced that he was planning to live at home and attend his home-town high school the next year. Thus the superintendent learned a lesson which many others have since learned: When George Meyer decides that something is to be done, it will be done. He also realized that a blind student attending a local district school would receive a better education if he had the guidance of educators of the blind. George returned to the school for the blind and attended the local high school, with guidance and help from the residential school faculty.

The janitor and one of the partially-seeing boys read assignments to him late into the evenings in a furnace room—the only place in the school with light that late at night. They took turns dictating the Latin textbooks letter by letter since neither had studied Latin. George hand-transcribed his own books. He was valedictorian of the 1914 class of some sixty or seventy pupils of the Vancouver, Washington High School and went on to receive his Phi Beta Kappa key at the University of Washington. From there he went on to become a great leader in public school education of blind students as well as a leader in work with blind persons of all ages.

The New York State School for the Blind, in Batavia, has followed this program on a selective basis consistently throughout the years. Many residential schools have made occasional use of local public high schools for special situations. Some have made ar-

rangements for high school students to return to their local district schools. Several have definite organized programs for students living at the residential schools to attend the local high school, with members of the residential school staff assigned the responsibility of "itinerant teacher" to provide necessary supplemental instruction, special materials and equipment and counseling service to the public high school and the students regarding their educational program and adjustment.

During the same period that the New York State School, the Washington State School and other residential schools for the blind were beginning to send some of their pupils to public high schools, some of the city school systems began programs for the education of younger blind children. These children were found in either braille classes or the more recent cooperative or integrated programs in the various school systems. Many of the graduates of these elementary school programs continued in their local secondary schools with the special teachers from the elementary programs serving as "itinerant" teachers for the secondary programs. A program for the education of blind pupils in the public schools of Newark, New Jersey was opened on December 10, 1910. The first graduate of that class was Mary Curcio who entered the group several months after it opened, skipped through eight years in six, and entered Southside High School, in Newark in January 1917. Transfer to the high school was not too difficult for Mary. During most of her grade school days, she had spent the largest part of the day in the regular classroom, returning to her special teacher for typing lessons while the others had penmanship and for handwork while the others had art. Her high school Latin books were already available in press braille. Her special teacher copied the algebra and French into braille and her seeing sister, Pauline, read the other assignments to her. Pauline attended the same high school. They traveled back and forth together by trolley. Mary also graduated with honors and went on to become a member of Phi Beta Kappa at New Jersey College for Women.

Largely through the efforts of Miss Lydia Y. Hayes, the first executive director of the New Jersey Commission for the Blind, other cities throughout the northern part of the state established special programs for blind children, pupils were graduated into

their local high schools, and services expanded to them. Miss Hayes who, although blind from childhood, was a trained and experienced teacher of seeing children, worked hand-in-hand with the special teachers and the high schools in counseling the students and providing special services. When one student finished a textbook, it was made available to the next. A service was soon established through which the Commission for the Blind paid a teacher in the high school to read to the student, to act as a liaison person to bring to the attention of the agency, or the special teacher, any difficulty that might arise. By the late twenties and early thirties, volunteer braillists began hand-transcribing textbooks. In 1933, a teacher was employed who relieved Miss Hayes and other members of the agency's staff of much of the work with these children. When Miss Hayes retired in 1937, the program whereby an individual blind student attended his local high school with supplementary services was so well established that it was state-wide. Pupils in parts of the state where there were no special programs for younger children attended residential schools for the blind, but came home for part or all of their high school work.

In 1934, one more phase of local school placement of blind children in New Jersey was developed. The Arthur Sunshine Nursery for Blind Children which was located in Summit, New Jersey, established a visiting counseling service for preschool blind children and their parents. Dr. Kathryn E. Maxfield, director of the nursery, believed that many blind children could profit from attending their local nursery schools with seeing children. Placement of a totally blind child in a public nursery school kindergarten followed in February 1935. The visiting counselor made regular visits to the nursery schools and to the kindergartens, bringing special materials, working with the blind child to facilitate his adjustment, and working with the school personnel toward a better understanding of the child and ways in which they could work together for his development. This program was carried on from 1934 to 1936, at which time it was discontinued due to lack of funds and lack of children.

When Miss Hayes retired in 1937, her successor as director of the Commission was George F. Meyer who by then had moved eastward from the state of Washington to Minneapolis where he

had been supervisor of the program for blind and partially seeing children in the local public schools. By that time, most of the larger cities in Northeastern New Jersey had programs for the education of blind children. The program for education of blind secondary students was established on a state-wide basis, but young blind children in other parts of the state had to leave their homes either to attend residential schools or board near the larger cities maintaining special programs. A review of the total situation indicated that additional city programs would not solve the problem. The children's homes were too scattered.

By 1939, a series of conferences and much correspondence was begun which ultimately developed into the employing of a trained and experienced teacher of blind children to direct the total program of the education of blind children throughout the state and to concentrate on the development of a program for the education of young blind children in their local communities. By the fall of 1943, the first first-grade child was initiated into an itinerant teacher program. The following year an additional teacher was employed to give full time to the itinerant program.

At the present time, there are sixteen itinerant teachers plus two teacher librarians and two supervisors and one director serving one hundred and six totally blind children and several hundred others with some useful vision. Of the eight hundred severely visually handicapped children from kindergarten level through high school in New Jersey, 10 per cent attend residential schools for the blind, 30 per cent are attending special city programs for visually handicapped children and 60 per cent are in their local school systems.

Since the philosophy of the New Jersey Plan involves school placement according to the needs of the child at the particular time, most children have experience in more than one type of program in the course of their school careers. The relatively small number of itinerant teachers are able to give service to such a large number of pupils due to provision within a state school law for employment of supplementary instructors. Through this arrangement, certified teachers who have not had special training in the area of education of the blind are employed to give up to five hours a week of individual instruction to blind or partially seeing

pupils attending local schools. These supplemental instructors work under the guidance of the itinerant teacher for the blind, thus enabling the child to have individual help for at least one hour daily if necessary.

Even more important is the dedicated work of approximately two hundred volunteer braille transcribers, sound recorders and bindery workers who supply the very important textbooks and other materials. If a blind child is to have a successful school experience in a class of normally sighted children, it is imperative that he have the same textbooks available to him in braille, or on records, and that he have these at the time that the class is reading the material.

This rather detailed description of the development of the itinerant teacher program in New Jersey has been given chiefly because the speaker is most familiar with that program and also because it is probably the most extensive program of itinerant teaching of blind children at the present time.

Throughout the country there has developed a continuing increase in the number of such programs. Administrative organization for these programs is almost as varied as the number of programs in existence. However, in many cases, as in New Jersey, the development of such a program has been the result of a long, careful planning process by educators of blind children. The success of these programs depends upon the close cooperation between the local school personnel, the special educators of blind children and the volunteers who prepare the necessary additional material, the parents and the community resources. In communities where more than one type of facility is available to a blind child, it is particularly important that there be good understanding and close cooperation between the various types of programs.

In the itinerant teaching program the key person is, of course, the itinerant teacher who must supply or arrange for "the extras"—the plus factors, the special educational needs of the blind child. Very recently, the American Foundation for the Blind has published three monographs, *Resources for Teachers of Blind With Sighted Children*, *Itinerant Teaching Service for Blind Children*, and *The Pine Brook Report*, which are recommended to those who wish to learn more about this type of program.

The Growth of the Resource Room

Address delivered at The First National Conference
Sponsored by The National Braille Club on Techniques
of Transcribing and Recording Text Books for Blind
Students, New York Guild for the Jewish Blind, October
14, 1957.

BY GEORGIE LEE ABEL

Introduction

It is recognized that there are various types of programs which make it possible for blind children to remain in their own homes and attend the nearest school which is available to them. This is indeed a fortunate situation since children have varying and individual needs, their families' problems are varied and changing in our fluctuating society, and the communities may present either meager or elaborate facilities.

While there are numerous variations in the programs which are scheduled for discussion at this meeting, it is possible to consider them broadly as the Cooperative Program, the Integrated Program and the Itinerant Teacher Service type of program. The school administrators who are able to plan creatively for the individual and varying needs of children often are able to combine one or more of these plans in the best interest of a total and functional program for each child. This means that those who are employed in all areas of any school system must strive for a keen understanding of and respect for each of the programs as they are brought into focus for the child who is blind.

We will here discuss only the first two types of programs, the Cooperative Program and the Integrated Program. The Itinerant Teacher Service type of program is dealt with elsewhere in this monograph.

History of the Specialized Program

The early requests for blind children to be educated with sighted children in local schools came around the turn of the century. The appeals were made by blind individuals who expressed the feeling that, if blind people were ultimately to live and work with sighted adults, the opportunity to be educated with sighted children might be an excellent way to grow in communication and participation during the important school years. The three blind persons who were most influential in the development of the early programs were John Curtis of Chicago, George Meyer of Minneapolis and New Jersey, and Robert B. Irwin of Ohio and New York. Between the years of 1900 and 1910 programs were established in Chicago, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Racine, Cleveland, Boston, New York and Newark. For the first quarter of the century the programs were developed mostly in the larger urban areas. The greatest increase in number in all types of communities has occurred within the last twelve to fifteen years. A striking example of this growth can be seen in the fact that in 1945 there were fifty-three programs in twenty-five cities in the United States, as compared to 200 programs in eighty-six cities in 1956, an increase of 377 per cent. The most recent estimate indicates that more than 40 per cent of the number of blind children within the legal definition of blindness are at the present time receiving their education with sighted children in the public schools. This growth has been tremendous and has presented enormous problems for those who accept the challenge of providing adequate service. This challenge is shared by the families of the children, the educational personnel at all levels of responsibility, the related agencies serving children, and by volunteer groups. Perhaps the most exciting and worthwhile services known to those who develop programs in the education of blind children comes from the volunteer braille transcribers and recorders who provide necessary books, reference materials and leisure-time reading for these children.

The Early Programs

It is natural that the administrators for the early programs proceeded with great caution. The blind children were assigned a special room, and now and then an additional adjoining room

was provided for the teaching of arts and crafts and some music, separately from the sighted children. Often those who doubted the wisdom of such programs referred to them as "little institutions." These programs were most often referred to as day school classes, special rooms for blind children, or braille classes. Psychologically, these titles were descriptive of programs which were more set apart than actually belong to school programs for all children.

It is inspiring to note, however, that as blind children were enrolled, they were able to demonstrate their abilities, and they did the best selling job of all. As the regular teachers observed the work of these children and as the specialist teachers became more skillful in helping the children to function with greater competence, there was less hesitancy to admit them to a greater variety of classes and activities in the schools.

As experience with the specialized program for blind children was shared by a greater number of school systems, it became obvious that in order to provide a better educational program it was necessary to achieve greater cooperation between the specialist teacher and the regular teachers in the building. This cooperative planning through the administrative channels used by all of the teaching staff naturally suggested the title of the "Cooperative Program." As in all other areas of special education at this time, the program was thought of as being so special that the specialist teacher must assume responsibility for planning and indeed sometimes for the major part of the administration. The additional salary provided such teachers, and the freedom from serving on school committees and duties regularly assigned to all other teachers, tended to set apart further the specialized program. To insure the special treatment which was implied in the Cooperative Plan, the blind children were enrolled in the special room and attended only those activities in the regular classes which the special teacher considered desirable or productive. The special teacher spent far too much of his time in simple clerical jobs, in preparation of braille materials and in providing reader service. In addition to these duties, there was the responsibility for teaching most of the subjects in the curriculum.

The Cooperative Plan as defined in the Pine Brook Report¹

¹ *The Pine Brook Report*—National Work Session on the Education of the Blind

was the development of another step in the progress of blind children and their education to achieve greater sharing between the blind and sighted children in more of the activities of the school program.

It must be stated here that many of the older programs have found it administratively difficult to change their procedures with regard to the special room assignment, and the relationship between the special teacher and the regular teachers. There are also states in which the regulations for financial reimbursement of classes have made it impossible to change some of these earlier practices. It is true, however, that skillful interpretations of existing laws have contributed to the flexibility of practices. As more is learned about the individualized approach in dealing with children, even though they may be enrolled in large school systems, greater flexibility and coordination of effort surely will be realized.

Blind children vary as much one from another as sighted children do. With this in mind, it is easy to understand that their needs to be functioning with their appropriate peer groups vary. If the purpose of this type of education is to provide the advantages of association early with children who see, it is obvious that the functions of the special teacher should be to help achieve this goal. This can only be done, however, with the full support and leadership of the administration of the school systems in which programs are located. If the opportunities and gains to both blind and sighted children are thoroughly understood by the administrators, all children profit and neither blind nor sighted children are deprived of participation in properly developed educational programs.

Productive Changes

Many events have occurred since the first programs for the education of blind with sighted children were inaugurated during the early years of this century. It has already been pointed out that the special teachers gained more skill in helping blind children succeed in more complicating situations, and blind children themselves served to acquaint their teachers and classmates with the fact that they could participate effectively in the total school program.

With the Sighted. (New York: American Foundation for the Blind Group Reports No. 2, 1954).

It is also true that the special education programs have grown in all areas, and that communities have come to a realization that in order to provide an educational program for all children, they must include children with handicaps. Certainly, increased attention has been given to teacher preparation in the area of the education of the blind as well as in the broader areas of the education of exceptional children. While problems have multiplied, with them has come greater stimulation to study and to experiment with new types of programs.

Those who studied these programs seriously looked at the sociological ideas which prompted this type of education in the first place, and they looked at the problems. Some of the problems seemed sociological in nature, and they related not only to the attitudes of blind children but also of sighted children and of people in general education who felt inadequate without the necessary orientation. As they considered equipment and materials, they began to see that the problems related to the purpose of the program had not really been faced.

If blind children were to associate with sighted children and really participate with them, they should be enrolled in the same grades with the sighted children; they should have identical textbooks and closely related materials and share in the rich educational programs developed by qualified regular teachers. Thus, blind children should be integrated into the same broad curriculum plan available to sighted children. They should also receive whatever service might be available from all of the consultative and administrative staff of the school system. Again, one result was the suggestion of a new name, the "Integrated Program."

These educational and sociological challenges prompted an even closer look at that specialist type of teacher who had been contributing so much to the previous classes.

With this newer concept, the special teacher would have to become a resource to the blind child in order that he might function more effectively with his sighted peers in his appropriate grade level or class. It was recognized that blindness presents particular problems which require the service of a qualified teacher with specialized preparation. Experience had shown that each blind child would have both needs and potentialities which often

would have to be understood by the qualified specialist type of teacher and interpreted to the other teachers and staff. This teacher would have to be available to the regular teachers and staff on matters related to the blindness of the child as it affected the educational program. This teacher would surely have to be a resourceful person.

A brief description of the resource teacher functioning in an integrated program today would be as follows. The resource teacher serves each blind child by providing or securing materials and equipment for him, by giving enough individual instruction to permit him to function at his highest level in his own classroom, and by offering that counseling which enables him to take his rightful place among his peers. The resource teacher contributes to the over-all effectiveness of the regular school staff by encouraging commendable efforts, by interpreting any special needs the blind children might have, by lending support to creative and experimental ideas which are in the best interests of the children, and by helping personnel other than teachers understand their importance in the total program. Occasionally, the resource teacher is called upon to help the community provide better service for blind children through contact with recreational, religious or social groups.

The room in which these specialized types of service would be provided for each blind child would have become a *resource room* to which the child returns when he needs help or when there might be need for enrichment to his school program. There might also be, on occasion, problems related to the use of both his general and specialized equipment, his reader service, some related resources in the school program, or extracurricular activities outside the school.

In order that the resource teacher be free to provide the various types of service and individualized instruction that each blind child might need, it is important that the children be enrolled in their regular classes. This practice would not be followed, however, if it were not recognized that each child would learn more and have greater opportunities for all types of growth in association with other children of his approximate level. In order to

insure that participation instead of visitation is occurring in the various regular classrooms, the resource teacher needs the opportunity now and then to step into the regular classrooms. This visit is for the purpose, not of observing the teachers, but rather of seeing the child at work and knowing what some of his current problems might be. Where there are good relationships between the resource teacher and the other teachers in the building, this type of brief visiting is welcomed rather than frowned upon. In some of the programs the regular teachers often ask the resource teacher to drop in to offer a little help in an arts and crafts period, or in certain other types of activities with which the regular teacher may feel the need of reassurance.

If the resource teacher is to be able to prepare certain short passages of reference material for a child to use in a regular classroom the next day or possibly within a couple of hours, it is important that the blind children understand why they return to the room. Is it for the purpose of receiving help with subject matter, or is it for the use of equipment? It is possible for two or three children to be working on various types of projects at a time when the teacher may be brailleing quick snatches of material, correcting braille tests, or doing various other tasks which make it possible for each child to function more effectively in the regular classroom.

The resource teacher, who first of all is a teacher, often has to act almost as a clinician in analyzing problems and in working with both children and adults. Good human relations make possible a sound program for all children. The school administration can facilitate the program or retard it, depending upon an understanding of the philosophy of the individualized approach and procedures.

Many goals and many problems are common to both the co-operative and the integrated program. The children vary as much today as yesterday. Some of them are able to function as superior members of their appropriate groups, needing little help beyond the specialized equipment, identical texts, sufficient related braille and recorded material, and occasional reader service. Certain others, like seeing children, present problems which make it difficult for them to have productive relationships with any group of

children. This may occur occasionally in cases of emotional difficulties or in cases which appear at first to be retardation. The resource teacher, like the special teacher in the earlier programs, is given the challenge of trying to know the child, of finding consultative help from the school system and elsewhere, and, after considerable study, of seeking for each child the amount of productive experience which is available to him. If this type of careful study is possible within a school system, it is then easier to determine whether or not the child is really helped by this program or whether another type of program should be found. Even if the problems relate to a child with multiple handicaps, the idea is to provide as much comfortable and meaningful functioning as is possible with those children who seem to make up a functional group for each particular child.

There are those, who upon first considering the integrated program, feel that more pressure would be placed upon the child who spends a great amount of time with children who see. On the contrary, as programs have been observed, it would seem that blind children with no additional handicap and for whom a good resource teacher is available seem to function at a higher level and need less help from the resource teacher. As the independence of average and above-average children is realized, there is more time for the resource teacher to help children with additional handicaps and provide the support and increased amount of individualized instruction which bring results much greater than might have been thought possible at the beginning.

The goal of the resource type of program is to find for each child the adequate educational service which he needs, and for the resource teacher to help the school administration to pool all efforts in behalf of the child. The very name of the resource room and the manner of functioning of the resource teacher should make it easier to realize the value of the program for all personnel in general education. Also, it should make the program for blind children an integral part of the public school system and not something which is set apart and difficult to understand. It is indeed general education with specialized service available to a small group of children with various problems that may relate to blindness.

Needed Services and Materials

With the rapid growth of new programs there are problems which baffle the administrators as well as gains which come to all who participate in them. The sociological and psychological gains for both blind and sighted children have been outstanding in a number of relatively recent programs. This cannot help but affect the attitudes of both blind and sighted adults of the future who should have greater communication and understanding because of the shared experiences of their school years.

The needs for more service, however, are great, and the citizens of this country have much to contribute through their understanding and knowledge of the value of good legislation.

There is still need in some of the programs for more careful orientation of the volunteers who are willing to serve the school system. The educational administration is responsible for the program, and if they do not use the excellent resources of volunteers and have the courage to point out why in some cases the service is not adequate, they are missing a valuable service and depriving blind children of both identical and comparable texts as well as leisure-time reading.

Some school systems have recognized the value of having paid staff to work with volunteer groups. This arrangement assures the school system of getting work done which has value and which is accurately done, and it helps perfect cooperative relationships between the volunteers and the school system. Some of the programs with greater experience have much to contribute along these lines.

The resource teacher's role in the development of educational materials in both braille and recorded forms is important and needs to be understood by the administrative and consultative staff in the school system. The teacher is closest to the children, and as he works through administrative channels he is often the best interpreter of the educational needs of the blind child. The teacher may not be as proficient a brailist, from the standpoint of quantity of material turned out, as are many of the certified, experienced braille transcribers. However, he knows, and should know, how to develop materials which can be used most effectively by blind children, and he is the best judge of certain ways of set-

ting up various types of materials. Skill in helping qualified brail-
lists to follow his suggestions is a vital part of his total effectiveness.

The teacher must not become so dependent upon the volunteer braillists that he loses his own ability to braille needed materials. There will be many times when children need something prepared on very short notice, and the teacher's skill in braille should be immediately available to them.

Teacher-made materials can best be described briefly as falling into the following areas. Identical transcriptions are such items as parts of technical reference books, special interest library books, board work, chart stories for regular classroom use, parts of newspaper and magazine articles and tests for use in the classroom or by school psychologists. Adapted materials might be workbooks for young children, parts of arithmetic materials, raised maps, science experiments, and instruction for art projects. Enrichment materials might include such items as stories about the children made into short books, books about school happenings for children who may be ill, new vocabulary cards, additional stories for the child who is having difficulty with vocabulary, small books of stories containing poems, library stories with high interest level and minimum vocabulary, number games, and braille additions to equipment in the room. The teacher may also be helpful to the volunteers in providing orientation for them and steering them in developing materials for community needs such as Sunday School materials, parts of scout and other manuals for very young children who need to have materials bound in small volumes, words and music to songs used in church and elsewhere. There are also additional types of material which can challenge the initiative of both the braillist and the resource teacher in such items as school calendars, portions of children's encyclopedias, school menus, weekly announcements at the school, games for rainy days, and attractive meaningful materials to be taken home to share with the families of the children. In this area the volunteers have a contribution to make.

Volunteer Services in the Education of Blind Children and Youth

Address delivered at the Workshop, "The Blind Student
in the Junior-Senior High School," San Francisco State
College, July 18-August 1, 1958.

BY BERNARD M. KREBS

There are few areas of human endeavor that can compare with the attainment and enrichment inherent in volunteer service for the blind. Like friendship, it blesseth him that gives and him that takes for it contains the essence of mutual achievement and satisfaction. To the blind it grants enlightenment and self-sufficiency; to the volunteer it transforms leisure hours into creative and constructive employment; to both it ensures fulfillment.

Volunteers are engaged in four major service areas which have fostered the social, economic and cultural well-being of blind people. Each has its specific advantages and limitations, but taken separately or in combination they have proven a vital resource of entertainment and education.

The large print typing program is geared to provide texts in large inkprint lettering for the use of partially seeing people. The volunteer calls upon previously acquired skills and the use of a bulletin board style typewriter to produce the required material. Occasionally an individual acquires this equipment for exclusive use, but generally the typewriter is housed at a convenient location and typists render service at specifically designated times. With the development of more effective optical aids, it has been feasible to transfer students from braille to sight-saving classes. Equipped with suitable lenses and large print textbooks, the student is able to function with comparative ease in whatever situation is right for him in his school program.

The direct reading service program is designed to provide a medium through which reading matter in inkprint can be made available without recourse to recording or braille. The volunteer generally renders direct service to an individual by reading aloud from inkprint copy at a prearranged time and place. With the aid of competent and reliable volunteers the entire width and breadth of the printed word can be made available to blind people.

The utilization of recordings for student work has proven a real boon in broadening educational and cultural opportunities for the blind. Volunteers who enter this service must acquire facility in handling disc or tape equipment and service is not restricted by time or place or individual contact. Recordings can be made in advance at distant places and by individuals who have familiarity with specific subjects. With these recordings at hand, the student is released to prepare assignments or engage in supplementary reading at his own time and convenience. The end result is a broader and fuller educational opportunity for the blind.

Braille transcribing is the richest and most rewarding service of all opportunities available to volunteers. To enter this service field, volunteers must undergo rigid training, acquire new skills, and meet the highest standards of accuracy and proficiency. No quarter is shown, for after a grueling course in what might almost be called a foreign tongue, the student must still submit an accurately and neatly transcribed fifty-page braille manuscript to the Library of Congress before certification is granted and service begun. In the end, however, the transcriber gains the deep satisfaction of real accomplishment by performing a service which has more meaning than any other. Braille is the source of information and communication from which flows self-reliance and self-expression.

Notwithstanding all present and foreseeable innovations, braille still retains its position as the most valuable tool ever devised for the blind. The study of foreign languages, music, mathematics, philosophy and science has been made accessible solely through this medium of communication since each demands rigid application and concentration. Some exceptional individuals may acquire knowledge in these subjects through other media, but, to the norm, braille remains foremost in utility.

To be truly useful transcribers should endeavor to maintain good standard of production and proficiency in the performance of service. A piece of current literature has maximum value if it reaches the braille reader while his sighted peers are still reading or discussing it; a textbook has value only if it reaches the student in time for the course. For general reading matter a minimum average of two pages a day should be maintained; for textbook material, speed of production must be governed by the requirements of the course.

But accuracy rather than speed is the watchword of good transcribing. A young lady once claimed that she had failed a Latin course because the transcriber had interchanged e's for i's. Public school authorities rejected the services of an entire transcribing group because its work did not meet acceptable standards. This group was reorganized under responsible leadership and now its work is sought for, both locally and elsewhere, to meet the shortage of textbook supply.

There are a number of developments which portend great good in increasing the value of volunteer service. Perhaps the most important of these is the discovery of a new printing process which will utilize the original prepared by a volunteer transcriber to produce up to fifty duplicate copies. The American Printing House for the Blind is prepared to offer this service in conjunction with its current program of textbook supply. Many years should not pass before each blind student will be supplied with equivalent texts to those of his classmates.

The Nemeth Mathematical Code has been found sound and effective for the production of mathematical texts from the lowest to the highest level. A number of revisions and clarifications are being considered and will be presented for examination and comment at the second National Braille Club¹ conference in New York on the 20th and 21st of October, 1958. At the same time a committee of volunteer transcribers expects to offer for criticism the first draft of an arithmetic manual which will help to initiate new recruits into the code.

¹ The National Braille Club decided as a result of this meeting to compile a lesson manual on elementary arithmetic demonstrating the use of the Nemeth Code and the teaching techniques involved.

For about eight years English and American committees have been struggling to arrive at agreement on basic changes in the Standard English braille system which will simplify rules and add new contractions so that braille might be learned, written and read with greater simplicity and ease. When the new code goes into effect on January 1st, 1959, transcribers will find it necessary to adjust to the new provisions, but, after doing so, they will soon discover the merits of the changes. In arriving at the final revision the committees went to great length to ascertain the viewpoints of braille readers on each proposal and the will of the majority governed all decisions. Approximately 30,000 readers were reached through magazines with nation-wide circulation and a remarkably large number took the time and trouble to give their reactions to the testing material which was designed to illustrate the proposed changes. Perhaps it might be of interest to examine a few of the revisions and the advantages accruing therefrom. It should be remembered, however, that a complete report on the changes as developed by the Joint Uniform Braille Committee will be released in the near future.

The contraction for *com* may now be used following the capital sign. Little justification could be found for the original restriction. Those of you who are familiar with the Dick and Jane Series will quickly recognize the benefit of this change. The blind child was immediately confronted by the first sentence, "come, come," where two different forms were used to express the same word.

The lower sign rules are to be revised to permit any number to follow one another provided that they are in contact with a higher character. Transcribers have found the many restrictions on the use of lower signs both confusing and difficult to follow. As for the braille reader, the constant variations in word pictures caused by the application of the rules acted as a deterrent to reading ease and speed. It seems ridiculous that the *en* sign could be used in the word open when followed by one punctuation sign but when followed by two or more it could not be used. The reader has already encountered and recognized the word and thus is not concerned by the sequence of lower signs.

In studying foreign languages, students are aided by the special

symbols for accented letters since through them they can arrive at the proper pronunciation of words. On the other hand, the adult braille reader has perhaps never learned or has long since forgotten these symbols and hence is only confused by their use in general literature. The special symbols will be employed in student texts, but elsewhere dot four, the general accent sign, will be used to show that a letter bears an accent mark and thus the reader will no longer be hampered by unfamiliar characters.

For the present, however, the old rules still apply. No changes should be made until they are authorized by the responsible committees. They have been presented here only for information and consideration.

All those who read articles affecting the needs of children who are blind are aware of the alarming increase of the number of blind children in all of the schools. Fortunately there has been a dramatic answer to the leading cause of blindness found in children and, while the number of blind infants and very young children has been reduced, the very large number of blind children must be provided for in the schools for a number of years. There is no doubt that braille textbooks and reference materials are badly needed and, in order to meet the needs for various types of texts, good braillists are needed as they have never been needed before.

Public and private educational facilities have been overtaxed because of this unexpected development, but fortunately a wealth of resourceful and competent volunteer workers have answered the call. In urban and suburban areas valuable corps of well-equipped and well-trained workers are rendering service but in many outlying regions the hands of willing prospective workers still remain idle. To fill this void, the New York Guild for the Jewish Blind has initiated two service programs and other agencies are also considering ways in which they can cooperate with volunteers in meeting the request from school systems where textbooks for children are so urgently needed.

Through our program for teachers of transcribers and refresher courses, volunteer teachers are being trained to service areas where no instruction facilities are presently available or where the expansion of existing services is indicated because of

increasing need. Volunteers in the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut area have attended this course while others, from as far afield as Chicago, have availed themselves of it through correspondence. The course covers teaching techniques and a complete review of braille rules with special emphasis on the more difficult principles. To pass the course, the student is required to prepare lessons with neatness and accuracy and to be thoroughly conversant with contractions and rules. Certification is given only to those who attain an average of not less than 95 per cent.

Although the Library of Congress offers courses in braille transcribing through correspondence, prospective braillists have encountered difficulty in undertaking this study through the medium of the instruction manual alone. An interesting experiment has just been completed in Westport, Connecticut where recorded lectures on tape were used to supplement and implement the lesson manual. The group of eight who enrolled in the course arranged to meet weekly at one another's homes to listen to the taped instructions and to discuss points of confusion. The assigned homework was thereafter prepared by each student and then forwarded to the instructor in New York City for correction and comment. The tapes were found useful in keeping students abreast of the course in the event that they could not attend one of the regular sessions. Trial manuscripts are now being prepared, and, if certification results, then, and only then, will it be shown that the tape instruction method is valid in practice as well as in theory.

No true estimate can ever be made to fully evaluate the outstanding contribution of service which volunteers perform as readers, as recorders of material on tape and as braillists for blind individuals of all ages. They have given of their support, their skill and their time without stint. Shoulder to shoulder with professional workers, they have thrown wide the gateway to social, economic and cultural opportunities which have brought blind people to fruition and fulfillment. Truly they are worthy of the highest commendation and praise.

In the glow of six stars the world of knowledge is alight.

Clay Modelling—A Means and an End

Address delivered at the Arts and Crafts Workshop,
Hunter College, July 7-25, 1958.

BY CHARLOTTE HAUPT

Education has as its purpose the meaningful enrichment of life. Beginning in the cradle and ending in the grave, one experience follows another. All those who teach, whether parents, teachers or just fellow men, make an effort to shed light on these happenings and to search for the meanings behind them. They help to interpret and clarify from their stock of acquired wisdom and their first-hand experience the complex objects with which the world is filled, as well as the functions of them in relation to our lives.

Our first teachers were our parents, and the mother must start her job as one on the very first day of a child's life. Parents can generally be divided into three classes: those who are overprotective of their young, fearful that some physical harm might come to them; who shield their offspring from new, firsthand experiences by doing too many things for them, instead of letting the child make discoveries for himself, even at the risk of pain and unpleasantness. Then there are some parents whose children seem to be "their second chance in life" . . . a chance to see that all the dreams or potentialities that were never realized in them shall find fulfillment in their offspring. These parents, in their ambitious love, push the child beyond his immediate capacities, urging on him every opportunity which they never had, or just neglected to use. Under the pressure of the desire to please his parents and live up to their expectations of him, the child becomes his most inadequate self. He is like the rejected lover, who suddenly and helplessly plays one losing card after another until he loses all self-confidence and abandons himself completely. The third group of parents are those who somehow are able to find the happy medium between the extremes.

Teachers do not have any difficulty in sorting out those children who are insecure, fearful of new experiences and are unadventuresome, from those who welcome the challenge of exploring new avenues, have a wonderful curiosity about the world they live in and who are self-reliant and confident because they know that usually they can manage to get out of jams without too much help. Those poor children who feel themselves inadequate, feel themselves to be failures because they think that they can never measure up to what is expected of them, develop a defeatism that thwarts pleasure and cripples their native capacity to learn about life from firsthand experiences. They think and feel that nothing is fun—"what's the use, I couldn't do it anyhow."

While the damage that parents do thus unwittingly to their sighted children is bad, the damage done in case they have a blind child is even greater. It is certainly natural that such parents, faced suddenly with so overwhelming a tragedy, should feel an even greater concern for their little handicapped one, wanting to protect him and make him use his opportunities well.

It has often been assumed that when one loses one of his senses the other four are especially keen, by way of compensation. This is certainly the way it ought to be, but the sad truth is that unless the hands of a blind person are developed by unusual amounts of experience they perceive no more than those of the ordinary sighted person. In an effort to find out what kind of experience or training would be most helpful in developing greater perception in the hands and fingers of blind children, the American Foundation for the Blind set up a project of research in this area. Four sculptors in various cities worked on it this past winter, and some of the findings surprised us.

Regardless of I.Q.'s or the academic standing of the children with whom we worked, those who came from homes where from their earliest childhood they had been free to explore everything on their own and at their own pace were the ones who used their hands well. Those who were overprotected and whose actual experience with objects was limited (less than those of a sighted child, instead of more) and those who had been pushed until they became confused and no longer had any desire to explore were not only poor with their hands but showed greater dependency in orientation as well as in mobility.

Eight grade boys who had high I.Q.'s and were exceedingly bright in academic work were discovered not to know the shape or form of the most common everyday objects. They knew facts about the objects, but they had no concrete concepts of their forms or shapes because they had never touched them, firsthand. They did not have any idea what a fish was like, or a bottle or an arch; one thought a rabbit's ears were like a human's; another thought a tree was as big as he was because he had been told that the biggest part of a tree was the trunk. I could go on endlessly.

It is therefore my contention that imparting firsthand knowledge of all the common objects about us is our first job as teachers of blind children. When the objects are not to be had, each instructor should have enough of a basic facility with clay to be able to model them (in three dimensions). There is a reason for the shape of things and, if the reason for an object's shape (always connected with its function) is explained, then the child can more easily remember the form. Each child should also be taught how to handle the clay so that he may copy the object and, while doing so, he will have time to form a mental image of it. We who see do not learn all about an object the first time we see it; we need many a look at objects in our environment before we truly know them; only as we study does our awareness of the qualities increase.

I have worked with many groups of teachers who have had no previous experience with art or clay, yet they were able, after a few lessons in basic techniques, to model practically anything they wished. Their products were not art, but they gave a three-dimensional concept of the basic forms of the object under discussion, emphasizing its distinguishing characteristics.

So the teachers in this workshop spent five hours learning, step by step, the ways of handling clay most easily. Each step was taught to them as they would teach it to their pupils. Each step was devised so as to give specific training for the development of the efficient use of hands and fingers. The training covered the use of both hands at one time, for grasp and awareness of over-all shape, the use of fingers for discovering thickness and spatial relationships, as well as for developing an apprehension and appreciation of form through the tactual-kinesthetic sense.

This latent capacity to create three-dimensional forms has been a Sleeping Beauty far too long. Once called to life she will serve

the teacher as a wonderful handmaiden, opening the doors of the world to blind children. For the youngsters, she will make the world of words change into a world of appreciable forms, and offer them, in addition, countless hours of happy, creative, self-expressing activity. Could we ask more?

Sleeping Beauty, come to life!

Community Resources Available to Visually Handicapped Children in our Community

Address delivered at the Northwest Conference on the
Education of Children Who Are Blind, Portland, Oregon,
October 24-26, 1957.

BY HESTER TURNER, Ed.D.

In considering my topic, I took time to reflect on how the community had actually helped me.

My twin daughters were born prematurely and both are considered educationally and legally blind. When they were two years old, the state held the first institute for parents of visually handicapped children. That was my beginning of positive action toward using all available resources in order to insure that my girls would be as normal as possible. As a teacher of health, physical education and recreation, I was aware of what the community had to offer. A little independent research revealed that almost every facility open to the public or to private classes would welcome a chance to help the visually handicapped.

My daughters are almost public property, but we have acquired a wealth of friends in the process. It is to encourage other parents to minimize the handicap that I am presenting this material.

In order to fully utilize community resources, one must start with that which presents itself the earliest.

Pre-School

For me, with my visually handicapped daughters, the preschool institute at the state school for the blind was the initial introduction to a positive effort to help my children. The school administrators make every effort to secure the attendance of all parents of blind children. Parents are relieved of responsibility during their stay at the institution. Kind women are provided to take care

of their children so that the parent may attend classes and may learn how best to handle their children. In recognition that a single effort does not insure as much learning as repetition, parents are invited to return summer after summer to reinforce positive thinking.

The preschool counselor, who attends the institute, follows up with advice and encouragement throughout the year. Her visits to my home, the toys that she brought to the children, the live bunny and the suggestions she made kept me constantly aware of the availability of help from the community.

Before a preschool visually handicapped child attends a nursery school, the counselor plans with the school personnel so that the child will be readily accepted. At the nursery school, the community provided a special teacher who worked with the entire group, but also was available to give help when needed to the blind child. Other civic organizations provided tuition and transportation if necessary.

School

When the child arrives at the age for his formal education to begin, he may avail himself of the state institution at no cost to his parents. The entire burden is borne by society as a whole. If the child stays in his own community and attends a regular public school, acceptance is assured by preplanning with the consultant and the regular teacher. Teachers are not forced to accept a visually handicapped child if they are unwilling or fearful of their ability to handle him. Itinerant teachers are provided who not only teach braille and other special skills, but also act as resource persons to supplement the regular class experience. Occasionally the itinerant teacher will accompany the blind child on field trips and give a more complete description of that which is being observed. Another important community resource to the school child is the visitation to dairies, bakeries, fire departments, etc., which enable him to have more concrete experiences.

Unplanned Education or Informal Learning

So much of the child's learning is in the community or home situation rather than in a formal classroom, that it becomes imperative for parents of visually handicapped children to utilize

as much of this valuable time as possible in providing firsthand experience for their children.

We have used the gym at Lewis and Clark College, where I teach, for classes which were open to youngsters throughout the city. College students helped to teach the visually handicapped children how to run, skip and move with ease. The college made the gym available for our use. For many youngsters it was the first opportunity to move through almost unlimited space without fear of bumping into objects.

We have found there are many public facilities that are interesting and exciting, such as the fire department, police department, library, museums and junior museum, forestry building, the zoo, county fairs, dog shows, flower shows, trolley rides and trains or depots. It has been our experience that a few words of explanation to the person in charge that it was necessary for the girls to examine things with their fingers in order to see them meant that we had a guided tour through many areas which would otherwise have been inaccessible to us. In Salem one evening, we parked near the railroad tracks where freight cars were being switched. As the engineer stopped in front of us, I explained to the engineer that the girls could not see but were curious to know about trains. He invited us to climb aboard and let us ride in the cab while we switched cars through Salem for forty-five minutes. The girls could ring the warning bell and feel all the throttles and gadgets.

Recreational Facilities

In our community we have used the Neighborhood House, Friendly House, both Community Centers, Jewish Community Center and the YWCA. All have opened their facilities to visually handicapped children—swimming lessons and family fun, crafts, tumbling and trampoline, day camps and summer recreation. The youth-serving agencies beside the ones listed above, such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls and Bluebirds, have made visually handicapped youngsters a part of their regular program. The Portland Recreation Department, in conjunction with the Park Bureau, offers crafts and sports, dancing lessons and many festivals. We attended the Japanese night festival and stood close to the entrance where the performers arrived. They let the girls

feel their kimonos and obis. The public library has a story hour that is enchanting.

Some of the opportunities for recreation which are open to the public but have a fee attached include lessons in dancing, music, rollerskating, boating, circuses, and amusement parks. The beaches are free and offer a wonderful opportunity for moving, exploring, learning new surfaces, textures and smells. One community group offered its lodge at Mt. Hood for the use of blind youngsters, and provided sleds and toboggans and an opportunity for a day of play in the snow.

Parents should avail themselves of many of these community resources because they need recreation in order to balance their own lives.

Community Resources for Emotional Growth

All of the resources previously named help one to establish a better balance to life, but at times additional facilities are needed. The preschool counselor is available, as are also child guidance clinics, psychiatric services at the medical center, the minister, the Sunday School, and the church.

The People of the Community

The individuals who make up the community are its greatest asset, or resource. The neighbors, though at first reluctant to accept the children, have made their homes available for inspection. Though at first they do not know what to expect, they soon learn that a visually handicapped child is not very different from any other. Clerks in the stores, once they realize the need to feel and examine, are willing to let the youngsters note the difference between cans, bulk packages, bottles and jars. Teachers, den mothers, service groups such as the Lions and Elks, who make the education of the blind one of their projects, the lifeguards at the swimming pools, students in my classes—all of these have accepted my children and each time another learns that these youngsters are just children who have to use other skills in discovering the world around them, it means that there will be greater acceptance of other handicapped children and more resources made available for those who need them.

Our Language Concerning Blindness

Address delivered at the Workshop, "The Blind Child in the Classroom," University of Denver, June 23-27, 1958.

BY WALTER F. STROMER, PH.D.

George Bernard Shaw once said that the adjective "firm" could be declined as follows: "I am firm; thou art obstinate; he is pig-headed." Now if you have ever been called pigheaded, or if you have used the term, you will know that the language we use does make a difference in how we think and act. Just so, the language we use in talking about blindness makes a difference in how we think and act about this problem. I would suggest that at least we could be a little more exact in the words and phrases we use to describe the facts or feelings we observe.

In an article in a publication for the blind, I came across this statement: "Blind farmers are experiencing no difficulty with modern farm machinery." That surprised me. More than that, it was a personal insult. I lived on a farm for eighteen years; and even with 20/20 vision, I had difficulty with modern farm machinery. These "blind farmers" were plowing under my ego. A few weeks after reading this article I had a chance to discuss the "offensive" statement with another man who was blind. It perturbed him not at all. He saw no reason why blind farmers should have trouble with modern machinery. He suggested that perhaps I was reacting too much in terms of my own experience and not allowing enough for adaptations that others might make. Things were getting worse. Now I was not only a poor farmer, but also a narrow-minded critic. Finally, I fell on an explanation which not only salved my ego, but which I honestly think points up a real problem in our communication about blindness. To me, the term "blind" meant total blindness. To me, the "farmer" meant my kind, the one who operates a farm of 160 or more acres, growing a

variety of crops and raising hogs, cattle, and poultry. To me, modern farm machinery meant tractors, cultivators, combines, corn pickers, and buzz saws. Given my definitions, I still insist the statement is a little farfetched. And to prevent me from defining the words in my own way, and to save us all confusion, the writer of that statement might have explained more specifically what he meant by "blind farmer" and "machinery."

Let us take another example. I note in another journal that blind people are teaching mathematics and biology in high school. This raises questions in my mind; and if I were a school administrator I think I would feel entitled to ask such questions and demand satisfactory answers. I would want to know what kind of mathematics and I'd want to know how. As for biology, I would want to know how do you as a blind person supervise the cutting up and drawing of smelly, slimy specimens soaked in formaldehyde? And how do you handle the student who, like Thurber, sees nothing but the reflection of his own eye in the microscope? This is not to suggest that blind people cannot teach mathematics or biology effectively; but it is to insist that they will have to make some changes from the usual procedure. I think it will help the understanding of blind people by sighted people if we freely admit and explain what adaptations are necessary and how they lead to a satisfactory end result.

In the examples mentioned, it would have been helpful to know exactly what degree or type of blindness was being talked about. For some jobs the difference between 20/200 and 10/200 may be critical to the point of success or failure. On other jobs total blindness may be no more a handicap than 15/200. In a report on the goals of college students, the American Foundation for the Blind used eight categories of visual acuity. This kind of specific language begins to be more meaningful. In looking over that report, incidentally, it is easy to see that certain occupational goals are more common among those with only light perception than with those having 20/200 vision. Now it is unlikely that we can get the general public to use so many specific descriptive terms; but if those of us who are blind or who work with blind persons cannot be more exact in our language, we ought not to be surprised when the public gets confused. Is it any wonder that the

public is confused about the meaning of blindness when in Ohio some years ago some people getting blind pension were also found holding automobile drivers licenses? Or when in Milwaukee a man's sight is so bad that he subscribes to the talking book service—and drives his car to work every morning? Is there a need for a more exact use of the term “blind”?

As must be evident by now, I think there is also a need to describe more specifically just what “blind” people do and how they do it. Most sighted people are constantly amazed that a blind person cannot tell a one dollar bill from a five (even with gloves on) or that he can manipulate the electric water cooler. Yet we calmly state that this blind person manages a small business all by himself, and expect people to believe it without question. They may admit that it sounds good, or looks real, like the rabbit the magician pulls out of the hat, but until they understand how, they will not be truly convinced. I am not naive enough to suppose that we can ever answer all questions sighted people can ask. Many times they will have to accept the fact that a person with a handicap did the job well, even though they do not understand how. On the other hand, I think we might be more helpful to both the blind and the sighted if we spent a little more time giving specific details of what and how.

Another problem in talking about blindness is the need to insist on individual differences despite similarities in visual handicap. Not long ago, I was told about a blind electrician who is earning \$4.20 an hour. I remember the figure because I was tempted to quit teaching and join the union. This man was doing such a tremendous job that his employer was looking for another blind electrician to hire. I was curious. I began asking questions. Was this man totally blind? Yes. Did he really do everything involved in wiring a new house or repairing wiring in an old one, and I was given enough specific examples to convince me that this was true. One more question. Is he an outstanding or superior person? No, just a high school education. But that was not my point. I wanted to know whether he was unusually adaptive to new situations. No. We talked more about this electrician. I was told of the time when he was installing wall switch boxes in a new house. Finally he called the foreman over and pointed out that these boxes seemed

just a trifle thicker than the ones usually installed in dry-wall construction. He was right. The mistake was discovered before 120 wall switches had been surrounded with wall board, and the contractor saved hundreds of dollars. Here was the difference I had anticipated. This electrician was not just average in every way. It took, it seemed to me, more than average alertness to notice the difference involved, and it also took initiative, or courage, or something having to do with personality to call the foreman over and point out the possible error. What disturbs me is that this man's employer may generalize too hastily from the performance of this one man and expect all other blind electricians to be just as efficient and capable. Chances are that most of them will not be, and that some may be even better. To talk as if one blind person is just like every other blind person with the same degree of sight and the same kind of training is dangerous. The kind of loose language that lumps blind people together, whether as geniuses or as beggars, is not helpful. What is helpful is the kind of description of an individual which includes some mention of his important differences from all others of his kind. These individual differences in personality and intelligence, in adjustment to life, can become the most important factors in determining adjustment to blindness.

In his letter to the mother of a blind child, Mr. Rottman says, "Blindness is a physical nuisance, an inconvenience which makes it necessary to learn other ways of doing what most people do with the aid of sight. The important fact is that these ways do exist, and that they work—for any blind person with enough self-confidence to use them." Notice the words, "for any blind person with enough self-confidence to use them." There's the rub. Some people don't make use of the adaptive tools available. Why not? Any answer given here will be vastly superficial since volumes have been written on the structure and development of personality. But it may be safe to point out that if an adult blind person does make use of the adaptive means available, he acquired the attitudes necessary for such adaptation a long time before he became an adult. When a blind person can use a white cane or a guide dog efficiently and comfortably, when he does not hesitate to use a slate and stylus to take necessary notes, when he can put a host or hostess at ease by

explaining what special consideration he would appreciate, he is probably reflecting a belief in his worth as a human being. How did he come by such self-confidence? Certainly not by reading a best seller on the subject. No doubt his parents got across to him as a child the idea that he was a lovable, worthwhile child. No doubt they made him feel that his physical appearance, his accomplishments, his way of doing things were wholly acceptable and worthy to praise, regardless of what other children did. If he were blind as a child, his parents and teachers helped him realize that while a world of lights and colors might be different from a world of sounds and smells, this did not make the one good and the other bad. Somehow they were able to instill in him the belief that what is really important is that each individual use to the fullest the talents he has. All this sounds so simple, so sensible, so commonplace; yet, its accomplishment is a tremendous task. If it is done, if the individual grows up confident that he is a worthwhile human being despite whatever limitations he may have, then he will adjust to whatever comes his way.

A word of caution may be in order at this point. True self-confidence is not built on undeserved praise. The handicapped child who is told that everything he does is wonderful, that he can do anything anybody else can do will one day discover that he has been deceived, and the shock will be considerable. A responsible use of language in administering praise and rewards can aid in developing attitudes of realistic self-confidence.

We have digressed from our main purpose for a moment here to hint at some reasons why some blind people make use of the aids to adjustment and others do not. Whatever the reasons, differences in ability to adjust do exist. Because they exist, we need to make note of them when we talk about adjustment to blindness.

While it is important to specify the degree or type of visual loss that a person has, perhaps the most important questions we can ask is, "What kind of person is it who has blindness?" If we can describe accurately the attitudes and values of the person who is blind we can probably predict how he will react to his limitations. Furthermore, destroyed sight can seldom be restored; defective personalities can sometimes be remolded. If we can state exactly what kind of person has blindness and if we can spell out the kind

of person we would like him to be, we may be able to move him in that direction.

This ability to use language exactly can be learned; it is not inherited; it is not acquired automatically through work with blind persons. The first step toward discussing blindness clearly is to know the facts; the second is to understand our own needs and motivations. Unless we know the facts about visual limitations, about job opportunities and on-the-job accomplishment, and about individual psychological differences we cannot accurately describe the fact territory. Unless we understand our own inner feelings, we may not understand why we balk at using the term "blind" or why we find it difficult to talk freely about blindness either to blind or sighted people. We do not need a special brand of people to work with blind individuals. We want people who can face the problems of life—deafness, blindness, paralysis, whatever they may be, with competence and equanimity. Such people can be comfortable in the presence of facts, all the facts, about blindness or anything else, and then get on with solving the problem at hand.

I am not suggesting that a proper use of language will solve all the problems of the blind. No problem is that simple. But we may clear up some of the constant confusion if we ask for specific answers to questions like these: Just what kind of blindness does this person have? Exactly what are his accomplishments and how did he do them? And finally, and most important: Precisely what kind of person is this person who has blindness?

Problems and Trends in the Education of Blind Children and Youth

Address delivered at the Northwest Conference on the
Education of Children Who Are Blind, Portland, Oregon,
October 24-26, 1957.

BY GEORGIE LEE ABEL

Introduction

It is difficult to establish priority in listing problems in the education of blind children and youth. Anything that seriously hinders the education and well-being of blind children is certainly a problem and is important to us. In the case of trend information, certain events may be more important because they may help solve problems, and others may require much more time and effort on our part because they create greater problems for us. Our goal is to try to be well enough informed to attempt to solve the problems that face us and, at the same time, to recognize that we are operating in many situations in various educational services with far too little information. We must be courageous, therefore, in interpreting these unanswered problems as well as recognizing our needs for help from others in order to solve many of them.

As we begin our discussion of trends, may we hope that the positive events or activities which appear to be trends will continue and that the serious problems for which there seem to be no immediate answers may become our challenge. Perhaps, as we seek and find solutions to some of them, we shall be contributing to the best trends that affect the education of all blind children.

The Administration of Programs in the Education of Blind Children

There are various kinds of problems too numerous to discuss at this time which may be based on the administrative set-up of

different types of programs. There are also differences in the intensity of problems which may be observed in particular localities. Some of these problems and trends are common to all small school districts, other may be unique to rural areas, or to large urban areas. There are the specific problems and trends which relate to programs in public or private residential schools for blind children, the cooperative or integrated program offering education of blind with sighted children, as well as various types of educational services provided by departments of education or general or specialized agencies which cooperate with schools where blind children are educated. Such a program may or may not provide itinerant teacher service. It would seem more constructive here, however, to try to think in terms of those administrative trends and problems which affect all blind children regardless of where they receive their education.

1. There are for all of the schools serious problems which relate to the numbers and characteristics of the children who are served. All of the schools are faced with the necessity of planning for the greatest number of blind children in our history at a period when there is the most acute teacher shortage that we have ever known. This great need for expansion both in personnel and in facilities becomes apparent at a time when there is much preoccupation with the recession and its effect on the education of all children. If these problems were not sufficient to baffle those who attempt to plan constructively for the education of blind children, there is the almost overwhelming consideration of the blind children who have additional handicaps. Multiple types of services, therefore, must be combined in a constructive way in order that each blind child may receive an adequate education according to the nature and complications of his needs and his desired goals.

The challenge for the administrators, and perhaps there are some good trends along these lines, is to determine as carefully as possible the eligibility of the children for whom specialized services are provided. It is still impossible to know how many children in the United States, falling within the legal definition of blindness, are enrolled in all of the schools. It is still impossible to know from any statistical reports that can be collected nationally, how

many of the children who fall within the above definition are being educated chiefly through the use of the braille system and how many can, in spite of their low vision, function adequately with the use of large print and/or magnifiers. In many communities children who fall within the accepted definition of blindness may be educated either as children who see with limited use of their vision, using large type and other aids or as children who are educationally blind, using the braille system plus other aids as their chief educational media. The lack of descriptive knowledge concerning these two groups of children causes serious problems which hinder good educational planning.

It is hopeful that there is constructive work being undertaken by some specialized national organizations in order to help bring about more uniform practices in recording statistical data that will help provide better information concerning children who need certain types of educational services. The federal government is also becoming much more active in collecting statistical data, but this will help only if those of us who are in the state and local areas make our needs known as to the desirability of better statistical practices and more effective descriptive information concerning the handicapped children for whom we provide specialized educational services.

It is encouraging to observe in some of the more recent literature frank discussions of visual efficiency and its importance in our appraisal of children who need specific services either as children who are blind or considered to be sighted children with very limited vision. We have had a few research studies relating to such factors as the self-concept of blind pupils, to the relation of certain personality factors to the use of optical aids, and to parental attitudes as reflected toward the blind and the partially-seeing child from preschool to adolescent years and up. We also have some vigorous discussions of the meaning of the definition of blindness which was originally conceived for economic or welfare purposes without the benefit of educational research. Perhaps more research along these lines will bring us closer to answers that may affect administrative practices in programs for blind children. If so, we may then be able to think and talk about which children are considered blind in regard to their educational programs, how they seem to feel about themselves, and how we react toward them in

the all-important interpersonal relationships. We may then have the long-past-due answers to the simple questions of how many children within the present definition of blindness actually need the braillewriter, the braille books, the large type typewriters, or certain of the magnifiers.

The American Printing House for the Blind still provides us with the best list of known children who operate within the legal definition of blindness. This list, because of the complications of programs that are not set up under authorized school systems, does not provide us with such information as the number of preschool children, and the number of children attending kindergartens. It overlooks, perhaps, an even larger number of children who are in institutions where they cannot pursue an education through the use of braille, children in certain of the parochial schools, and the unpredictable number of children who are losing vision or are newly blinded and are attending certain local schools only with the help of a reader and, at best, a tutor. This means that our best list at the present time is not reporting nearly all of the children who might be considered blind by definition and who, if help could be given their families and/or the school administration, might benefit from more effective educational programs.

The best statistical estimates today, and there are many, vary so greatly that one has to be particularly careful in determining which group of children are considered in the numbers quoted. With the current shortage of equipment and educational materials, all administrators find it necessary to consider this problem in all of its aspects and to try desperately to come up with clarification in counting the children served in terms of their characteristics and the types of service which have been offered. If this can be done in a more effective manner, perhaps there can be better use of the limited facilities that are available. With the reduction in the number of children affected by the leading cause of blindness among children, there should be an opportunity to refine these procedures and perhaps to use more wisely the small amount of equipment which is presently owned by the schools and organizations which provide educational services.

2. Recruitment and selection of personnel is acute in all areas

of education and is no doubt greater for those who are trying to find qualified teachers of blind children. The discussions of the qualification of teachers of children who are blind have been much more productive, and there has been research in this area along with a greater number of teachers attending summer sessions as well as year-round courses in colleges and universities in the country. There is still the problem, however, of the school system that has promised parents that it will develop a program and then finds that it is unable to find a teacher, or the residential school for the blind that needs two more elementary teachers and has not been fortunate enough to hire them. Certain state departments of education and agencies have secured new positions in their budgets and, in some cases, they have not been able to fill them. This means, however, that there is a search for the best type of staff, and certainly, whatever selection goes into the process, consideration is given to this important topic.

On the encouraging side, it is amazing to note that all types of organizations, such as the parent-teacher organizations, the Lions Clubs, the Delta Gamma Fraternity, and the parents of blind children have provided generous scholarships for teachers of blind children. National organizations such as the American Foundation for the Blind have increased the number of summer scholarships for teachers and fellowships for year-round students who would study at the graduate level in this area of education. With the somewhat smaller enrollments of the future, the challenge is to try to keep the qualified teachers who have come into the education of blind children and also try to interest even more highly qualified persons to become the replacements of the future. If administrators continue to call for the teachers of blind children to be first of all qualified and experienced in teaching all children, they must do everything possible to encourage and improve the functioning of these people once they are in the school system. This, many administrators are doing, and there are some dramatic stories of their efforts to find and keep good teachers.

3. Responsibility for good legislation which is flexible enough to provide for necessary changing regulations can become a concern for administrators. Such problems as placing a minimum on

the number of children who must be found in a local district before a service can be provided, the interpretation of a budget which must be large for a residential school even though there is a small enrollment, or defending budgets which include expensive clinical services which may not be included in the regular school program for a small number of children, can become baffling problems for an administrator who desires to serve blind children. There is very often a need for administrators to interpret such problems to citizens' groups and parents who may offer needed support. In spite of our fluctuating economy with its high cost periods and depressions, administrators need all the support they can secure to defend education upon the basis of the nature and quality of service which must be offered. Citizens are interested in receiving the quality of education for which they are providing financial support.

The education of children who are blind is an expensive proposition. It provides for perhaps the smallest group of children in the total school population, but the size of the group does not make the problem any less important. The goal for us seems to be to describe and define clearly the educational program and its required budget, and to continue to refine our interpretations.

4. Working constructively and cooperatively with the parents of the children served in all of the programs for blind children is high on the list of administrative responsibility. There have been many problems in these areas, particularly in certain phases of special education, and there have been fascinating stories of small groups of parents in various communities who have set forth all types of principles concerning "how our schools should be run," but generally it has been true that the parents of blind children in most localities have attempted to study and then present their problems. They are not any freer from concerns and unrealistic goals than are other parents who face problems. Some of them have not been better able to respond to the most skilled professional help than have been parents of sighted children. By and large, the parent movement has presented many problems for administrators, but the wise administrators seem to have been able to surround themselves with sufficient quantity and quality of pro-

fessional personnel whose responsibility is to work with parents of school children. When this has been done, many problems seem to be handled even though it is well known that they are not all solved. It has been stated frequently that the problems of parents and their abilities are just as individual in nature as are those of their children. Those who have been able to work with the families on an individual basis have been better able, perhaps, to set up more constructive group situations which do help the school administrators and which lead to much more constructive home and school relations. Interested parents have provided many distinguished services to the school which do not need to be listed here. These cooperative efforts stem from the needs of the families and the ability of the school authorities to serve, and the common interests of both in the welfare of the blind children in the school programs.

5. The provision of ancillary services has a great importance for the administrator, and it seems especially necessary in the programs for children who are blind. There is no question that the various medical services not only help determine the eligibility practices for specialized service, but provide valuable information for the educators responsible for sound placement. Because of the nature of some emotional problems and varying needs of these children as well as their parents, it is important to provide either on a full or part time basis certain of the clinical services. The psychological, the social casework, psychiatric services along with good counseling service where schools do not provide them in sufficient quantity form a very real and necessary part of the total planning for each child. There are also various types of service from volunteers which become absolutely necessary in certain programs. They, perhaps, could be used to some extent in all of the schools if there were sufficient paid staff to develop the service and steer it in the right direction.

If local or state funds are not available to provide sufficient reader service, braille books and specialized equipment for blind children, the school has to depend on outside services. Moreover, if schools cannot provide either at the local or state levels sufficient funds for scholarships for teachers or expenses for conferences

which all too often are located at some distance from the schools, it is wise to set up such funds and invite citizens to contribute to them. The school can control the use of these funds and can also give a clear and frequent report concerning the expenditure of such funds.

In the area of wise use of various types of ancillary services, the trends are very good. We know of school systems that have been able to set up scholarship funds within their own schools and have provided for the complete cost of additional preparation for teachers of blind children. There was a local community where a teacher was needed. The parents came to the rescue of the school system which was unable to come up with a candidate for the position. Funds were raised in a dignified manner making available the teacher's expenses at a summer session, the cost of a maid for the two young children and the travel expense. There is another dramatic story of a local church, a group of volunteers and a full-time secretary, provided by the school system, combining their efforts in a volunteer production service of textbooks and reference material for blind and partially seeing children. This project is located in a Sunday School building of the church. What can be more empty than a department of a Sunday School during certain hours of the days of the week? Not only is good production achieved, but there is also distribution of the materials to and from the schools. In one of the states it has been possible for a women's organization to provide funds which would make possible conference expenses and scholarships for teachers in the state residential school and local schools which provide programs for blind children and for other direct service personnel serving these children. The list of such activities is long. The schools are better because of the service, the communities are stronger because they are serving people, and the blind children in need of various types of service are profiting.

The Curriculum in the Education of Blind Children

One of the most consistent aims as reflected throughout our history in the education of blind children has been that blind children, within the limits of their abilities and problems common to all children, should be able to pursue the same curriculum as

that provided sighted children. The approaches used by the educators, some of the equipment used, and the related services and resources which should be combined in the total educational plan, deserves special and serious consideration.

As in general education, there are the usual variations in what is considered to be of greatest importance; these emphases have changed as general education has changed. This is another example of the close relationship between general education and the education of children who are blind. The methods of procedure likewise have changed as more knowledge in general education has been made available, and as more teachers and administrators of programs for blind children have taken advantage of research in closely related fields which have bearing on education.

More recently, there has occurred much more discussion of what is the added curriculum that must be considered in terms of the specific needs of children who are blind. There have been those who would suggest that there is needed almost a making over of certain curriculums as reflected particularly in some of the earlier articles. We find such titles as "Geography for the blind," "How to teach the blind language arts," or the frequently mentioned, "Arts and crafts for the blind." Other educators have raised very real questions as, "Is this really a different arts and crafts, geography, or language arts?" "Aren't these children, after all, children who may need special approaches and resources in these same subjects that are pursued by sighted children?" Or, "Is this not a question of—how do *we* make certain subject matter areas more meaningful or real for certain blind children?" With all of this came the problems of individual differences among the blind children and of the educational problems related to information concerning their blindness or very limited vision. In all of these discussions there is evident, a real desire to consider at all costs the individualized approach in meeting the needs of each blind child and perhaps a conscious effort to refrain from projecting on to the child our sighted concept of what he may or may not find helpful in our approach. Perhaps we have been on guard much more as we have tried to profit from knowledge relating to children, and also to avoid generalizations which really may not meet too many of the individual needs of all of the children who are blind.

One of the most exciting trends noted, concerning qualified teachers of blind children, is their eager willingness to observe carefully the work of the children. They have studied the reactions which indicated experiences which were real and experiences in which more interpretation was necessary due to the lack of visual observation. In other words, the teachers have been willing to learn from the blind children and, when this happens, both the teachers and the children grow.

The added curriculum or "plus curriculum," as it has sometimes been called, has received more attention as educators have really attempted to consider certain aspects in terms of the needs of blind children. Educators are concerned with these problems which seem to relate to the lack of sight or the very limited residual vision, as contrasted with those difficulties which seem to arise out of the lack of resourcefulness or skill on the part of the direct service persons who face the problems. When good teachers observe at times their apparent lack of effectiveness in certain areas of the curriculum, they often comment upon the fact that teaching children who are blind has helped them to become much better teachers of all children.

The most frequently mentioned areas of "plus curriculum," or the content which is necessary for a competent teacher to understand, have been presented in the U. S. Office of Education study¹ dealing with competencies of teachers of children who are blind, according to the following broad categories:

- a. Knowledge of medical factors
- b. Understanding and use of reading and writing equipment
- c. Selection and use of aids and appliances
- d. Curriculum adaptation and program adjustment
- e. Knowledge and ability to work with related resources.

While all of the above-mentioned areas do not deal specifically with the subject matter areas of the curriculum, they do affect it in suggesting a very important relationship to the children for whom the curriculum is planned. There are such aspects as the amount of vision, complete lack of sight, and whether or not the

¹ R. P. Mackie and L. M. Dunn, *Teachers of Children Who are Blind*, (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1955; Office of Education Bulletin No. 10).

child is congenitally blind or recently blinded. The various types of agencies and organizations which need to be pooled on occasions if a total educational plan is achieved has been emphasized. There is also broad discussion of the philosophy concerning the adaptation of the curriculum because of the fact that the child is deprived of visual observation.

The areas of the "plus curriculum" have been further discussed in the Itinerant Teaching Service report,² under four broad areas: Medical Factors; Braille Reading and Writing Skills; Creative Command of the Environment; and All Other Curriculum Areas. "Creative Command of the Environment" refers to orientation and mobility skills and "All Other Curriculum Areas" includes the adaptation of the general curriculum and the factors relating to efficient living or social adjustment skills; also the importance of bringing into focus for the blind child, wherever possible, those experiences which come within his arms' reach or his eye range in the event of very limited vision. There is expressed the caution to teachers to try to gain skill in interpreting for the blind child those experiences which cannot be brought within close range for them.

The curriculum area which provides us with our greatest challenge in considering the needs of blind children who later must function as blind adults, seems to be found in the orientation and mobility skills. Certainly the braille skills are basic and very necessary; but blind children, like sighted children, have somehow managed to read and write after a fashion regardless of the approaches which have been used to encourage most of them to read. There have been problems and perhaps the greatest amount of professional writing has been devoted to the reading and writing areas. Some of the most dramatic literature in our field has been centered around the braille system with the various revisions and compromises in the codes.

There have been some encouraging new signs in the more recent research in braille reading and in some newer approaches to the teaching of reading. There are still many unanswered ques-

² *Itinerant Teaching Service for Blind Children*—Proceedings of a National Work Session held at Bear Mountain, New York, August 20-24, 1956 (New York: American Foundation for the Blind Group Reports No. 5, 1957)

tions but, with more professional interest in the subject, surely the efficiency of the blind child in his reading, if he is well taught, will continue to be shown and forward-looking questions will continue to be raised with respect to improvements in the system. More functional braille books in various areas of subject matter will still come up for discussion, and better duplicating systems and writing equipment must surely come as our research and distribution practices continue to improve.

There are those educators who feel, however, that each blind child needs almost more than anything else to feel secure and comfortable in his environment. He needs to feel close enough to the objects in his environment to become oriented to desire and to feel confidence enough to gain constructive mobility skills that help him to move out in both his immediate and more complicated environment. Those who are applying the best techniques gained from people who have worked with adults, to the best educational information that we have concerning children, are beginning to develop a body of knowledge and some tested skills which may be taught to children who are blind. This type of curriculum must be first of all given to teachers who in turn gain the skill and confidence necessary to transmit such skills to children. It would also seem that those teachers who acquire skills in the techniques which they teach should consider the orientation and mobility of blind persons in all of the important aspects: the physical factors, psychological implications, and the interpersonal relationships with the blind persons whom they teach. They will recognize in this as in all other curriculum areas the individual differences which must be understood and respected. They will also recognize the growth process that must take place, step by step, and they may respect the thought that a blind person may not really become mobile with confidence until he is first oriented. Most of the good orientors from whom teachers must learn many of these skills will inevitably point out that there are no short cuts in these important teaching skills.

It is encouraging that more schools are giving consideration to this area of instruction which must be available to all blind children, and it is gratifying to know that certain teacher preparation institutions have plans to offer such courses to teachers. The first

such course has been conducted for a limited group of educators. If this area of the curriculum is offered early enough in the child's life, the problems involved in the mode of travel for the older blind pupil can then be faced with much greater objectivity and perhaps at an earlier period in the future. With good counseling, the blind student himself may then have a major share in the final selection of his mode of travel with full information concerning the resources available to him.

In a discussion of this length, it should not be necessary to consider all of the obvious aspects of the curriculum. As the blind child's needs are understood at the right time, he should be able to acquire skill in script writing for legal and social situations, to make efficient use of the typewriter, to master all equipment which will help him function to his full capacity in all of the curriculum areas as well as in all phases of his life outside of school. Certainly, any intelligent development of a curriculum for the blind child recognizes the importance of all good mental hygiene practices, and the recognition of the self-concept of the blind person. Each child needs to have the opportunity to gain, as early as is practical for him, some insight into his own feelings about his blindness and its relationship to certain of his problems. Only through the introduction of the best counseling can we make sure that growth in an educational program means real growth in the person for whom the program is planned.

Philosophy of the Education of Blind Children

The philosophy underlying the practices in the education of blind children has grown through the work of professional people who have expressed on numerous occasions what they have known, what they have thought and what they have believed. The progress that has come to us might well represent the combination of these three variables in each of the educational leaders who has revealed to us the wisdom that prompted their thinking and the feelings that stimulated much of their action. It has often been pointed out that our substantiated knowledge based on research is at best meager, but the best thinking that we have experienced has provided us with most of our good practices and indeed much of our philosophy. Our feelings, when they have been genuine and

objective, have provided us with the inspiration to defend our ideas and the energy to pursue our actions in behalf of those children whom we serve.

What we feel concerning the education of blind children may not always help us find answers. Our feelings can become so important to us that they cause us to behave as if those feelings were facts. What we feel may not be as easy to express as what we think, but, as we gain insight into our feelings, we grow in our confidence in that which we think because we have studied. We may also grow in our respect for the feelings of others whose study and frame of reference may be different from ours. The desire to share our knowledge, thoughts and feelings with others in behalf of blind children in all educational programs can be prompted by the hope that all of our efforts are directed toward the same goal: the well-being of blind children. If this is true, perhaps our differences can be evaluated and our ultimate philosophies can be refined.

As in general education, our thoughts and feelings have changed through various periods. In a democracy like ours, the educational changes must surely reflect changes in our society. Of particular significance in our democratic philosophy has been the consistent defense of the individual and his needs for an adequate education. If this were not complicated enough, we recognized the varying or changing needs of each of these individuals who are enrolled in our schools. In this type of thinking and believing concerning individual differences, as expressed by educators, blind children are no different from those who see. With their individual needs and problems, they too might profit from various types of schools and agencies, all of which, it might be hoped, would attempt to provide service on the basis of the needs of each child.

1. Have we made progress in reducing our differences in thinking and feelings relative to the education of blind children? There are marked differences in opinion, particularly concerning the types of schools in which blind children should be educated. These differences affect greatly some of the administrative procedures, type of personnel selected and use of resources.

There are those who feel that the residential school for blind children provides the best answer for the education of all these children. They feel that sharing the competition and the goals of other children with similar problems provides necessary and realistic opportunities in all phases of the educational program. There are others who believe just as strongly that blind children should be educated with sighted children in their own communities where they have the opportunity to live with their own families. There are even some who feel that a combination of both of these types of education should be provided for blind children during the years of school life. The third suggestion has found its greatest support, however, in those residential schools that have used the facilities of the junior and senior high schools in the community for certain of their students to enter or enroll in courses during the last years of school.

There have been great variations in all of these plans, and there have been differences in the intensity of feeling in regard to the importance of each type of program when considering each child with all of his problems. Is this such a radical difference when one considers that in almost every section of the country today children are found who have either been dropped from one type of school or referred to another educational program? Are there not specific questions that one must ask when he finds himself caught in the feelings of those who at times tend to place the defense of a particular program over and above the needs of the various children for whom the program was devised? For example, such questions as the following might be asked when programs are under discussion: For what kind of children is this program designed? What type of service or combination of services is this school able to offer children? What are the qualifications of the personnel who can be secured in order to provide service to these children? If this particular school is unable to provide an educational program for certain types of children, does it have professional staff to provide another suggestion of a school or a referral service to an appropriate agency so that the family will not be left without any help?

Are there improvements in the answers to some of these questions which are sought in all of the educational programs for blind

children? There are many examples found in groups of people getting together in all sections of the country for the specific purpose of attempting to pool certain resources, or to adopt more uniform reporting systems, or perhaps to work out a much smoother referral service. There is the instance of the state where the preschool worker, the superintendent of the residential school, the representative from the public school system involved with educational planning meet at designated intervals for the purpose of discussing each child in the community whose educational placement may be in question. They are working toward a constructive team approach to the educational placement of each blind child in terms of his needs and those of his family. There are also the regional planning meetings within a given state or there are groups which cover a large number of states where conferences are held. Representatives are invited from all types of educational programs and so are parents of blind children, personnel from agencies serving children and key citizen groups, with the expressed purpose of trying to plan constructively for blind children at home, at school, and in their communities. The American Foundation for the Blind and the American Association of Instructors of the Blind, meet at least once each year to discuss the sharing of problems and expenditure of funds in certain national projects affecting blind children. The Foundation has also engaged with the American Printing House for the Blind in some planning concerning the needs of local school personnel and directors and consultants in state departments of education for the development and distribution of more educational materials. From such activities as these should come new ideas, needed because of the rapid changes in our educational programs.

Perhaps if we could think of the children more positively we could come up with more positive answers to some of our administrative problems. The writer of this paper has served on various types of committees studying programs in both residential school settings and in schools that have provided for the education of blind with sighted children. These studies have been conducted with advisory committees. When one has had these experiences, it becomes almost impossible to generalize with respect to a "which is which" philosophy concerning a residential or a nonresidential

school type of education for blind children. The committees have reacted to most of the problems revealed in the various studies with the conviction that there is nothing wrong with any of these programs that bigger budget and the addition of various types of personnel would not remedy. In other words, they are all as good as their personnel, their philosophy, their equipment and facilities and, indeed, their budgets.

2. Have agencies, both general and specialized, contributed to the philosophy and work of the education of blind children? During the past few years there have been various types of agencies that have expressed great interest in cooperating with programs in the education of blind children. These have ranged from small foundations which have set up either an individualized casework type of service or a nursery school for preschool blind children to the large private or state agency which offers services ranging from preschool to rehabilitation services for blind adults. There has been greater evidence of the state departments of education providing consultative service to educational programs, particularly through the newer positions of state consultants to the visually handicapped. Also, there has been much more activity in the child welfare departments or the divisions of services to the blind most frequently located in the state departments of welfare providing service to both preschool and school-age blind children. There has been for some time the rehabilitation services which are available to schools when the children have reached the age to become eligible for this service.

All of these services have brought involvement of a large number of relatively new people engaged in various types of service to blind children. When schools have been able to clarify their needs and use the services which could enrich the educational program, the service has been constructive and no doubt brought about positive attitudes toward blindness among more people. However, where there were too many different types of agencies attempting to provide service and too little coordination of effort in cities and states, the result has no doubt been confusing and the schools have perhaps been more reluctant to test and perhaps reject those services which were not as effective totally.

No doubt the same old problems of attempting to provide all services to all people in a single agency, or difficulties in drawing together various services from departments when there is a specialized division within a large state department, do affect the philosophy of some people who provide the service. The agency personnel, however, face the same reality of focusing on the service on the basis of the needs of the children served and upon the skills which are required by the person assigned or by another person to whom the case may need to be referred. Where the aim has been, as in most educational programs, to become first of all a good social caseworker, therapist, teacher, and then provide the necessary additional preparation or orientation, the specialized personnel becomes more highly qualified. These specialists can then combine their efforts with those of the regular personnel, thus making their service more effective.

The entry of agencies into services to schools is relatively new on the large scale that we now find it. If there is clarification of the point that the responsibility of the school is kept strong and the agency becomes a strong resource, the result seems to be constructive. If agency services become so crowded that they make it necessary for people to serve in areas in which they are not qualified, they tend to deprive children of the best possible service and excuse the school system from providing the type of service for which it has been traditionally responsible. When, for example, a social caseworker provides educational service to a school, and a teacher is responsible for services which might well be provided by a social caseworker, the result might be the lack of service and the frustration of the person attempting to meet the needs of children. The social agency, like the school program, is perhaps not too much better in meeting the huge challenge than its budget, its personnel and facilities. It is important to note that schools in some communities could not exist without the service of some of the agencies. It is unfortunate that in too many cases the excellent work of the local, state and private agencies cannot become demonstration projects leading to the necessary action to secure the same service to the school program from municipal and state funds.

At the present time, schools do seem to be improving in their use of related resources, particularly the agency services, and the

agencies seem to be much more conscious of their obligation in reporting their findings and providing information which is helpful to the school system in planning more effectively for children. The need is still great for more personnel at the state level which can be made responsible for certain implementation in many of the programs and which can provide at the same time more consultative service of an educational nature. This type of service cannot be expected to come in large measure from either state or privately supported social agencies. Their history and experience has been in other areas of service which most schools never have in sufficient quantity on their own staff. One of the very hopeful signs has been found in the schools which have secured paid staff to act as liaison with agencies as well as to carry much of the direct responsibilities for working closely with the volunteers who have made valuable contributions to the education of the blind.

The school which uses agency services and works with volunteers must assume great responsibility for interpreting its philosophy. More people are coming close to the school through their service to children and more opportunities are available for them to help the school interpret some of its needs and its goals. If the personnel from the schools can be courageous and skillful, they often can bring about certain desirable changes in some of the practices of certain agencies. Such matters as public relations, ethical practices with respect to press, TV and radio, and constructive and confidential handling of referral can be improved in most situations where all concerned are aware of the problems.

3. Have the direct service personnel contributed to the philosophy in programs of education for blind children? Those who come closest to the blind children in all of our schools have the rare opportunity of contributing in full measure to the philosophy and well-being of the blind child. Administrators have considered the role of the teacher as one of the most important in the entire staff employed in any school system. Indeed, the teacher is all too often the only person in the school system who is required to become certified in order to have the privilege of teaching children. Of more recent date have come the credentials for consultants, supervisors and administrators. According to frequently writ-

ten statements, teachers of blind children have been asked not only to secure the general education preparation plus specialized courses but also have been required to secure much more specialized preparation than the administrators who formulate the administrative practices that the teacher must follow. In many states the teachers have been asked to return to school much more frequently than have their administrative and consultative staffs. For the privilege of the dynamic experiences enjoyed in direct service, therefore, the teacher and certain others of his direct service colleagues are required to become quite highly qualified individuals in comparison with many other people employed by the school system.

It is not necessary to repeat here that teachers, once they are on the job, have been asked to engage in many types of activities in school and in the community which did not form a major part of the content of their college or university courses. With this broadening of the activity of the teachers and their added professional requirements, wise administrators have used the skills of the teachers in a much more effective manner. They have engaged in democratic administration which involves the teacher with the various staff members as well as, on occasion, the parents of the children. Teachers of blind children have a unique contribution to make to any team which explores the needs of children in an educational program.

There have been great problems with respect to the teacher shortage, as well as the recruitment of the right teacher for a position in this specialized area, but there have been at the same time exciting developments. Perhaps the search for good teachers has caused more evaluation of what goes into the preparation of a good teacher. Colleges and universities have asked the question, "What is this unknown quantity which we really want in a teacher?" There has been some research, and there have been outlines of research projects that would affect most direct service people in their relationships with blind individuals and help them to consider objectively the desirability of this type of career.

One of the hopeful signs has been the study that has been undertaken for the purpose of inquiring from teachers who are on the job what they feel is important in their teaching. They have

been asked to look at their previous courses in terms of the types of activities which they most frequently perform on the job. They have been urged in some of the questionnaire studies to tell what it is they would want in courses, should they have the time to return to the colleges and universities. There are some college and university courses that have been revised with the view toward the inclusion of some of the findings in these studies.

In the various studies of teachers of blind children, both published and unpublished, teachers have asked most frequently for such enrichment in the college and university programs as the following: More directed observation and student teaching with blind children under the leadership of master teachers with preparation and experience in the specialized area; More opportunity for field trips to all types of educational programs in order to achieve a strong point of view with respect to differences in philosophy and an objective opinion concerning the strengths and weaknesses of various programs; More opportunities to meet and discuss mutual problems in the education of the blind with qualified professors who themselves have taught blind children.

The teacher is the one person in the list of those who provide direct service to blind children for whom there have been definite courses devised. It has been felt that the psychologist, the social caseworker, and the therapist do need orientation and a knowledge and experience with agencies and schools but, if they are strong in their disciplines, they should be able to acquire the necessary emotional balance to help them accomplish satisfactory work. Good orientation, it has been felt, helps them look at the problems of these children and helps them apply their skill to them as they would to sighted children with their various types of problems. There is no doubt, however, that there is need for greater skill in providing orientation which recognizes the variation in professional people. They certainly do not need an identical preparation nor does each of them need the same amount of orientation. They do, however, need much more help from their supervisors, and there are not too many courses in the colleges and universities at the present time which develop this type of educational leadership person. There are some beginnings in the broader areas of special education but some of them have found it a bit difficult

to achieve a constructive multi-disciplinary approach in such courses.

Those who consider the area of teacher preparation creatively will recognize the challenge in this area of education in terms of the impact of blindness as manifested by the sighted people with whom the blind children come in contact daily. If the direct service people can be helped to gain skill in their own insight, they will no doubt understand their own problems. This awareness should help them to provide understanding and support for the blind children whom they teach. When teacher preparation courses are set up which provide opportunities for thorough exploration into the psychological and sociological aspects of blindness, there should be more teachers who can grow in their understanding of the problems they meet in various phases of the school program. This cannot be done in a strict lecture course which makes pronouncements of theories of what others have said and done, but rather experiences must be available to the student teachers in which they can gain knowledge which they can apply and from which they can recognize those areas which require more maturity and experience. The more exploration that is possible during the teacher preparation period with dynamic experiences, including both blind and sighted individuals in discussions and activities, the more likely will be the success on the job. The teacher who has gained a positive point of view with respect to the abilities and needs of blind children should be able to interpret those needs and abilities to others in the school program and in the community.

The American Foundation for the Blind has engaged in a long-range program to study problems in the area of teacher preparation as applied to the education of the blind. It now has an advisory committee of personnel outside the Foundation and it plans a series of conferences and committee projects which should help evaluate and improve the course content available to those who would teach blind children. The work of these people should also consider important research projects in education designed to provide us with answers to many of the problems which challenge us today. Perhaps again, as in previous situations, those who have engaged in the education of the blind will be able to contribute

richly to other areas in the education of exceptional children as well as to our colleagues in all areas of general education.

As direct service personnel are sufficiently qualified they should be able to gain their feelings of success from the achievements of those children whom they serve.

Suggested Reading List in the Education of the Blind Child

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- P. M. Moor, "Meeting the Needs of the Preschool Blind Child and His Parents," *Education* (February 1954) pp. 1-8.
- M. Norris, "What Affects Blind Children's Development," *Children* (July-August 1956) pp. 123-129.
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- F. R. St. John, *Survey of Library Service for the Blind, 1956* (New York: American Foundation for the Blind, 1957).
- E. Wilcox, "The Houseparents' Role in Home-School Relations," *New Outlook for the Blind* (June 1955) pp. 202-206.
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DR. BERTHOLD LOWENFELD was born and educated in Austria and received his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Vienna. Before coming permanently to the United States in 1938, he taught blind children and directed an institution for seeing children in Vienna. In 1930-31 he studied in the United States as a Rockefeller Research Fellow. From 1939-49 he was director of educational research for the American Foundation for the Blind and instructed at various colleges and universities. Since 1949, he has been the superintendent of the California School for the Blind in Berkeley, California. In addition to numerous papers dealing with various aspects of service to blind individuals, Dr. Lowenfeld is the author of *Our Blind Children—Growing and Learning With Them* (Charles C Thomas, 1956), and of the chapter, "Psychological Problems of Children With Impaired Vision" in *Psychology of Exceptional Children and Youth*, edited by W. M. Cruickshank (Prentice-Hall, 1955). Dr. Lowenfeld is a fellow of the American Psychological Association.

CLARICE E. MANSHARDT received her B.A. from Whittier College and has secured additional graduate work both in general education and in the education of the blind at San Francisco State College. She has acted as lecturer and participant in many regional workshops in this area at San Francisco and at Temple City. In addition to outstanding work in music, social service, and administration in education, she holds many committee assignments in California and acts as instructor and advisor in courses at U.C.L.A. and at Occidental College in California. She has also found the time to publish a book of poetry *Lines on the Desert*. One of her most recent projects is her work with the Quota Club in her community,

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JOSEPHINE L. TAYLOR received her B.A. from Western College, Oxford, Ohio, and her M.A. degree from New York University in educational administration and supervision. Her experience includes the positions as preschool counselor in New Jersey under the Arthur Sunshine Nursery for Blind Children and the New Jersey State Commission for the Blind, elementary and visiting teacher at Perkins School for the Blind, and director of educational services for the New Jersey State Commission for the Blind since 1942. During Miss Taylor's varied experiences in behalf of blind children, she was president of the National Braille Club, president of the New Jersey Conference on the Handicapped, member of the board of directors of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind and the International Council for Exceptional Children. She was one of the delegates from the United States at the International Conference of Educators of Blind Youth in Oslo, Norway, in August 1957.

GEORGIE LEE ABEL received her B.S. and M.A. degrees from George Peabody College for Teachers and has done further graduate work at other institutions. She has contributed articles to various publications dealing with general education and health as well as specifically with the education of blind children, including the chapter "The Education of Blind Children," in *Education of Exceptional Children and Youth*, edited by W. M. Cruickshank and G. O. Johnson, (Prentice-Hall, 1958). She has coordinated three national work sessions dealing with the education of the blind, has served on occasion, as a consultant to the U.S. Office of Education and is a member of various general education organizations. She is listed in *Who's Who in Education*.

BERNARD M. KREBS is librarian of the New York Guild for the Jewish Blind. He has been associated with the work of volunteers in the preparation of braille texts, reference material and other types of books for a number of years. He has acted as a teacher of braille to both blind adults and to those who transcribe materials for children and adults. A graduate of New York University he received his education in the specialized program for blind students in the New York City Public Schools. He was a member of the Joint Uniform Braille Committee for the revision of the braille system and is a member of the resulting interpreting committee. The pamphlet, "Transcribers' Guide to Standard English Braille," published by the Guild, was prepared by him and he has written various other

articles dealing with the braille system and services to blind people.

CHARLOTTE HAUPT received her B.A. from the University of Cincinnati where she also did graduate work in applied arts. She has achieved success as a sculptor and as a teacher of art. Her most recent teaching assignments with children have been during the school year at Bentley Private School in New York City and during the summer months with private classes for children and adults in Southampton, New York. Her recent work with teachers has been as art workshop consultant for teachers at Norfolk, Virginia under the auspices of the University of Virginia. She served as lecturer for Hunter College and the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind in a recent workshop on arts and crafts and has been associated with a research project for the American Foundation for the Blind, working directly with young blind children. Miss Haupt is listed in *Who's Who in the East* as a sculptor.

DR. HESTER TURNER received her B.S. from Our Lady of the Lake College, San Antonio, Texas, her M.A. from Southwest Texas Teachers College, San Marcos, Texas, her L.L.B from the University of Arizona and her Ed.D. from Oregon State College. She has held a number of teaching positions, both in elementary and secondary schools, at Oregon State College and presently at Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon, where she is professor of education. She has written articles relative to services to blind children and has engaged in research in the general education field. As a mother of two young blind daughters and as a college professor, she has given consultation and has acted as a participant at parent group meetings and at certain educational institutes and conferences.

DR. WALTER F. STROMER is a graduate of Hastings College in Nebraska and received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Denver where he taught in the adult education department. He has been a frequent lecturer at summer sessions conducted for teachers of blind children and has lectured at various types of institutes in residential schools for the blind. He is a World War II blinded veteran and is at present professor of speech at Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa. Dr. Stromer is an active member of the American Speech and Hearing Association.

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